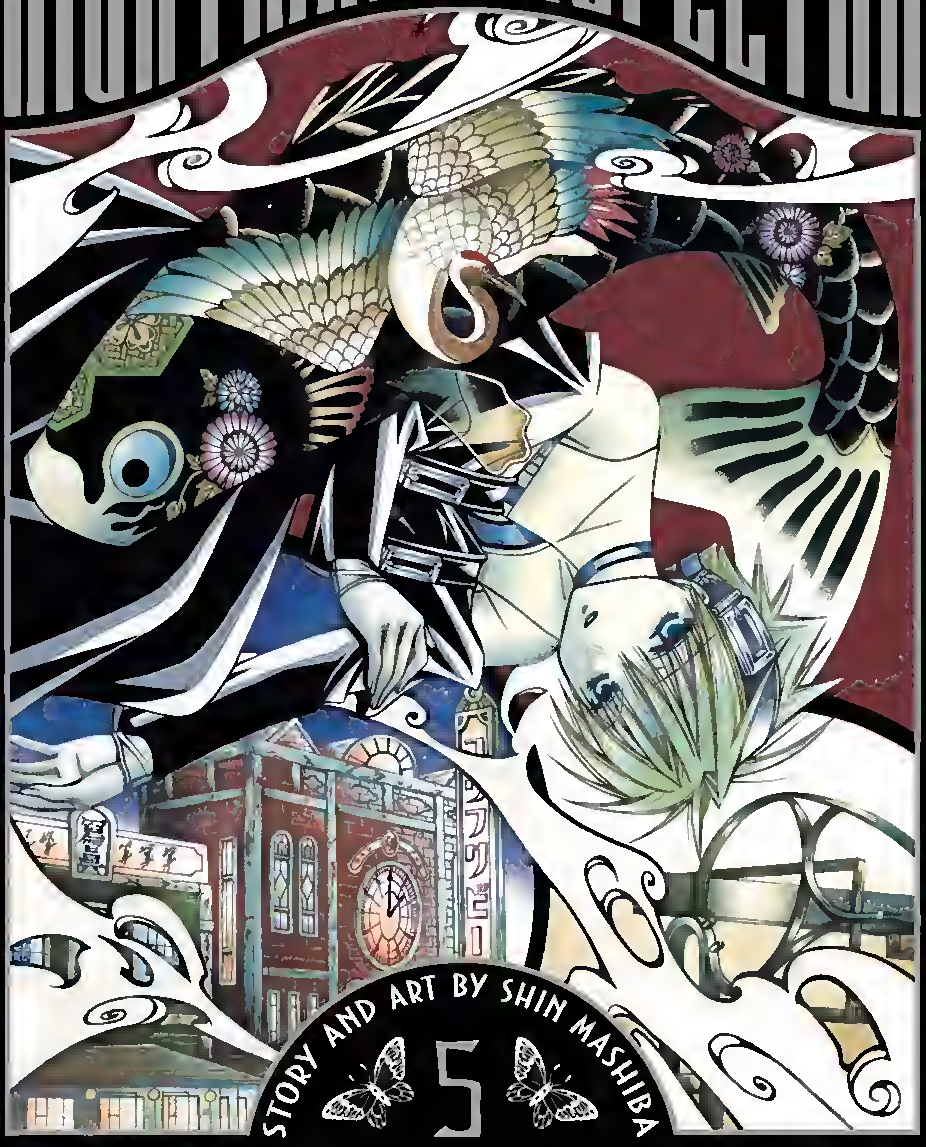
YUMEKUI KENBUN

# NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR



STORY AND ART BY SHIN MASHIBA

5

YUMEKUI KENBUN

# NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR

STORY AND ART BY SHIN MASHIBA

5

## DARKNESS

YUMEKUI KENBUN

# NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR

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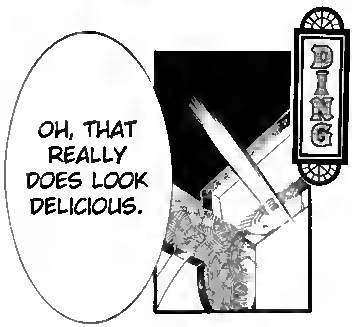
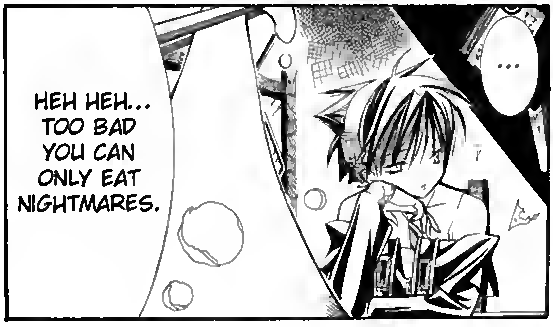
# The Twenty-Seventh Night: The Gap



SORRY TO BOTHER YOU.
I'M KAMEKO YASOJIMA. I'M HERE ABOUT A NIGHTMARE.
PLEASE COME IN. WOULD YOU CARE FOR SOME?
YES, LATER.
BUT FIRST, IS HE HIRUKO?
YOU'RE QUITE SMALL.
?
THAT'S GOOD.
WHISPER
I HAVE THIS NIGHTMARE ABOUT MY FIGURE...
WHISPER
WHAT KIND?
WHISPER
I'M TOO EMBARRASSED TO TALK ABOUT IT HERE...
WHISPER

I SEE. THEN LET ME TAKE A LOOK AT YOUR DREAM.
SLEEP NOW... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.

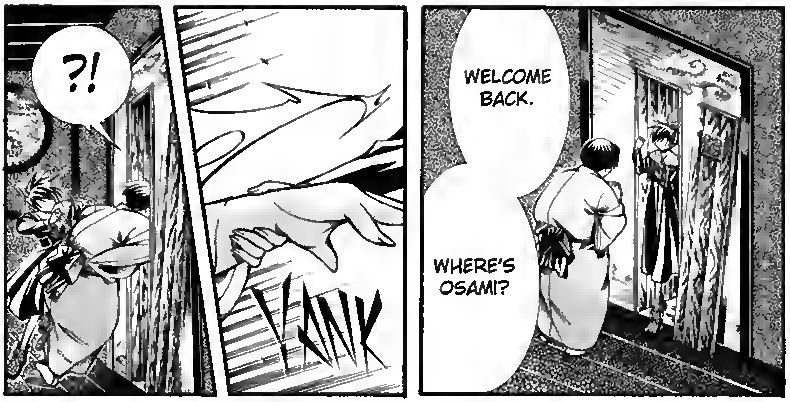
PAT
PAT
AS THE DAUGHTER OF A RICE MERCHANT, THERE'S NEVER BEEN A LACK OF FOOD, AND BEING SURROUNDED BY ONLY BROTHERS... WELL, I GOT THIS BIG.
MUNCH
MUNCH

OH, DOES THAT SOUND LIKE AN EX-CUSE?
...
CLACK
HEE HEE. BUT THE REAL REASON IS THAT I LOVE TO EAT.
SO MUCH SO THAT I EVEN DREAM ABOUT IT.
BUT NOW THAT I'M OF MARRYING AGE, I STARTED HAVING A NIGHTMARE ABOUT MY SIZE.
THE HOLE IS PITCH BLACK. I CAN'T SEE A THING.
PAT
PAT
HOW IS THIS A NIGHTMARE YOU ASK?
IF YOU REMOVE THAT BOARD, YOU'LL SEE.
CLUNK

I SEE SOMEONE.
KAMEKO, WHO IS THAT?
THAT'S THE MAN I'M IN LOVE WITH— OSAMI.
HE EXISTS IN REAL LIFE TOO.
Want some?
Later.
HE'S SO PASSIONATE ABOUT HIS WORK. I FELL IN LOVE WITH HIM INSTANTLY.
BUT I DON'T HAVE THE COURAGE TO APPROACH HIM. NOT LOOKING LIKE THIS...
I JUST WATCH HIM FROM AFAR WITHOUT SAYING A WORD.
SO...

I WANT TO BE ABLE TO TALK TO HIM! ...AT LEAST IN MY DREAMS.
BUT I CAN'T FIT THROUGH THIS GAP!
I'M SO SAD... THIS DREAM IS REALLY ABOUT MY ISSUES WITH WEIGHT, ISN'T IT?
IF ONLY I COULD SLIM DOWN ENOUGH TO FIT THROUGH THIS GAP. THEN I COULD TALK TO HIM... BUT I CAN'T STOP EATING!
PLEASE, HIRUKO!
YOU CAN FIT THROUGH THIS SPACE.
PLEASE! GO OVER THERE AND BRING HIM HERE!
BUT THAT DOESN'T SOLVE THE REAL PROBLEM...

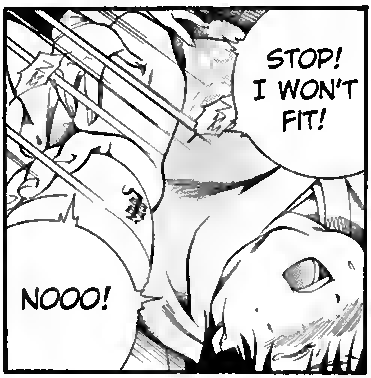
I'm counting on you!
FUSH
IT'S NARROW ... BUT THERE'S PLENTY OF HEADROOM.
TMP
TMP
THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THIS THAT FEELS STRANGE...
IT'S CHILLY...
...
YOU'RE A LITTLE SMALL.


?!
YANK
WELCOME BACK.
WHERE'S OSAMI?

SHOVE
AAAAH! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
IT HURTS! IT'S TOO TIGHT!

I'M GOING TO VOMIT! I CAN'T STAND IT!
SHE FEELS IT TOO.

I CAN'T DESCRIBE IT...
IT FEELS CREEPY IN HERE...
BRRR


STOP! I WON'T FIT!
NOOO!

HUH?

CHIZURU.
...
KAME-KO, WHO IS SHE?
OH! THAT'S ...
SHE'S OSAMI'S LOVER.
HE ALREADY HAS A LOVER?
YES... BUT I DON'T CARE FOR HER. SHE INTIMIDATES ME...
SHE REALIZED THAT I HAD BEEN SECRETLY WATCHING OSAMI. SHE CALLED ME FAT AND FLAUNTED HER OWN SLIM FIGURE.
SHE'S CRUEL. BUT...
...SHE REALLY DOES HAVE A BEAUTIFUL BODY.

OSAMI HAS FALLEN IN LOVE WITH HER BODY.
CHIZURU... YOUR BODY IS SO LONG AND SLENDER.
YOUR WAIST IS SO FIRM..
EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU IS WONDERFUL!
SO HE'S THE KIND OF MAN WHO VALUES APPEARANCE OVER SUBSTANCE.
THAT'S WHY I COULD NEVER SHOW MYSELF TO HIM.
BUT ...!
I STILL LOVE HIM!
JUST GIVE UP!

IF THAT BOTHERS YOU...
THEN LOSE SOME WEIGHT!
DON'T YOU GET IT?! OSAMI WANTS SOMEONE WITH A BEAUTIFUL BODY LIKE MINE!
I'M HIS IDEAL! THERE'S NO WAY HE WOULD EVEN LOOK AT YOU!
CMP
ICK. YOUR GROSS BODY IS SUCH AN EYE-SORE
HER BODY...!

OH... OSAMI...
YOU'RE SO MEAN.
IF YOU CAN'T DO THAT YOU'LL NEVER HAVE HIM! HIPPO! HIPPO!
SHE'S THE CLOSEST TO MY IDEAL WOMAN.
WIO
UGH...
AH...
AH.
ZMM
ZMM

ME ...
THIS BODY ...
I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE.
I'VE ALWAYS KNOWN THIS!
A MAN WHO CARES ONLY ABOUT APPEARANCES WOULD NEVER LOVE SOMEONE LIKE ME.
I... I HAVE TO CHANGE!
I'M SUCH AN IDIOT!
SNAP
THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME HE'S LOOKED AT ME.
UHH... OSAMI...
UH... UHH...
YOU FAT COW.
THERE'S NO WAY HE WOULD EVEN LOOK AT YOU!
...NGH.

MY MIND IS MADE UP.
I'M GOING TO LOSE WEIGHT.
FOR ME, AND FOR OSAMI.
SO I CAN FIT THROUGH THAT GAP.
LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE MADE YOUR CHOICE.
POOF
ONE MORE THING, KAMEKO...

THE SIZE OF THE GAP ...
IT'S CHIZURU'S BODY PERFECTLY
BUT I'LL PROVE MY LOVE FOR HIM.
IT'S SAD THAT MY GOAL IS TO BECOME MY RIVAL.
I CAN'T CHANGE MY HEIGHT BUT I CAN WORK ON EVERYTHING ELSE.
I'LL DO ANYTHING!
WHEN YOU'RE SLIM ENOUGH TO PASS THROUGH THIS GAP, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO TALK TO OSAMI. IN YOUR DREAM AND IN REALITY...

YES, AND UNTIL THEN I WILL KEEP HAVING THIS DREAM.
TIME TO WAKE UP.

A MONTH LATER
DING
GASP
銀星館
IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
IT'S ME, KAMEKO YASOJIMA...
KAMEKO?!
IS IT REALLY YOU?!
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? YOU'RE SO...
I THINK YOU OVERDID IT...
SHUP
IT LOOKS LIKE YOUR DETERMINATION WAS YOUR DOWNFALL...

I EVEN MET OSAMI IN REAL LIFE TOO.
BUT I FIT THROUGH THE GAP WITH PLENTY OF ROOM TO SPARE.
I'VE REALLY DAMAGED MY BODY. AS YOU CAN TELL, I CAN BARELY WALK.
I DIDN'T MEAN TO GO THIS FAR..
I NOW HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM.
THAT'S GREAT.
SO HE FINALLY RECOGNIZED YOUR DEVOTION TO HIM?
NOT QUITE ...
I WAS TOO SKINNY TO BE HIS IDEAL... AND I WAS ALSO TOO LATE.
HE HAD ALREADY MARRIED CHIZURU.

YOU WORKED SO HARD. WHAT A SHAME...
SQUEEZE
OH DEAR... HE MUST HAVE REALLY LOVED HER BODY...
YES, IT REALLY IS A SHAME.
SLIP
BUT FOR SOME REASON I DON'T FEEL SAD.
I DON'T EVEN DESPISE CHIZURU.
?
KOUICHI
MY BODY AND HEART ARE WITHERED, BUT I FEEL LIKE I'VE BEEN FREED FROM MY IMPOSSIBLE DREAM.
NOW I CAN FOCUS ON EATING AND REGAINING MY HEALTH.
AND AS FURTHER PROOF THAT IT'S ALL OVER, THE GAP WAS FILLED IN.

THAT'S GOOD.
BUT KAMEKO, THERE'S STILL SOMETHING THAT BOTHERS ME.
WHAT WAS OSAMI'S WORK?
HE MAKES COFFINS.
HE ALWAYS WORKED SO HARD, AND WHEN I GOT TO KNOW HIM I DISCOVERED WHY.
HE LOVED HIS CREATIONS MORE THAN ANYTHING. OR ANYONE...
寝棺・半寝棺・二重
立棺・座棺・早桶

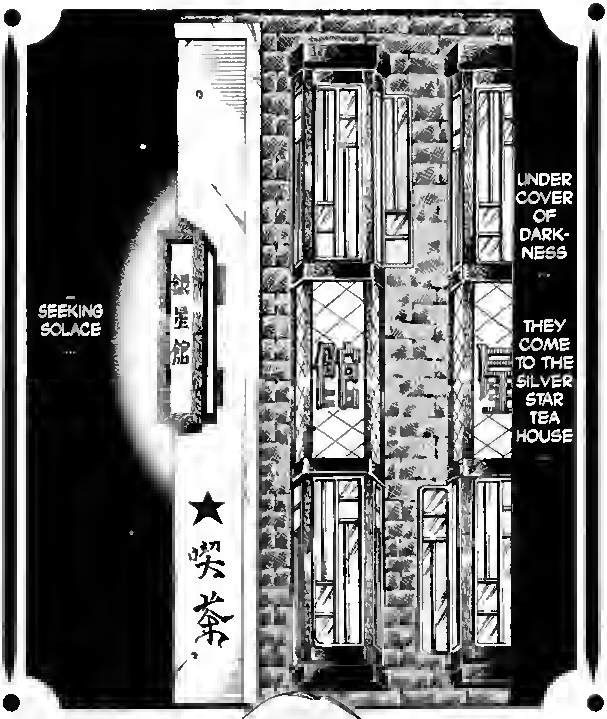
HIS FAVORITE COFFIN WAS A CASKET HE MADE FOR A MEMBER OF THE NOBILITY.
HE WOULDN'T PART WITH IT, NOT EVEN FOR ITS OWNER.
WHENEVER I USED TO WATCH HIM, IT WAS ALWAYS BY HIS SIDE.
IT WAS HIS MASTERPIECE...

BUT AFTER HE MARRIED, THE COFFIN DISAPPEARED. ALONG WITH ANY TRACE OF CHIZURU...

I WONDER ...
...IF HIS WORK WAS ONLY COMPLETE ONCE IT HAD A BODY INSIDE.
SO, DO YOU HAVE A NIGHT-MARE FOR ME TONIGHT?
YES... BUT I THINK IT'S ALL RIGHT NOW.
THE OTHER DAY MY DREAM CHANGED.
THE GAP THAT HAD BEEN FILLED NOW HAD A LID ON IT AGAIN.
I REALIZED THAT THE GAP AND THE COFFIN WERE THE SAME SIZE.
THE CARVED DETAILS WERE THE SAME TOO.
BUT THAT DOESN'T MATTER ...
IT'S ALL OVER NOW ...

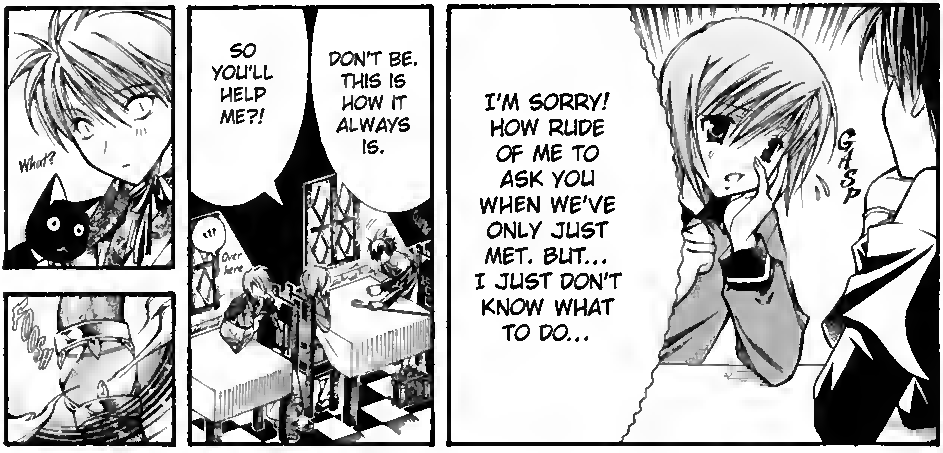
UNH...
I CAN'T... BREATHE...
HELP ME... AHHH...
SOMEBODY...
SOMEBODY!
AAAH...
NOW I JUST EAT MY RICE WHILE LISTENING TO THE SCREAMS COMING FROM BEHIND THE LID ...

# The Twenty-Eighth Night: Darkness



IT'S COLD AND DARK AND THERE'S NOTHING BUT MYSELF.
EXCEPT ...
EVERY NOW AND THEN I SENSE A PRESENCE FAR AWAY.
SOMEONE OR SOMETHING I CAN'T SEE ...

I'M TOO SCARED TO TRY TO GET NEAR IT.
CAN YOU FIND OUT WHO OR WHAT IT IS?
Ha ha ha. Look this way, Naamu!

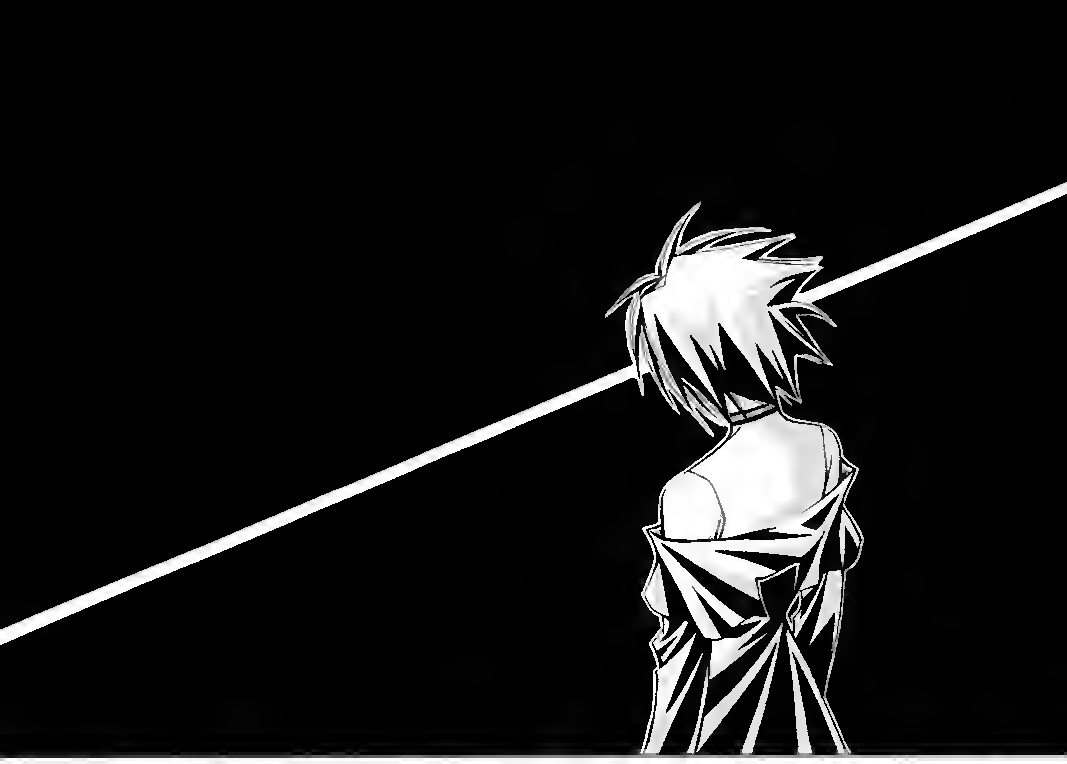

I'M SORRY! HOW RUDE OF ME TO ASK YOU WHEN WE'VE ONLY JUST MET. BUT... I JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO...
GASP
DON'T BE. THIS IS HOW IT ALWAYS IS.
SO YOU'LL HELP ME?!
What?

SLEEP NOW .
LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND

THIS IS HORRIBLE. IT'S THE EMPTIEST NIGHTMARE I'VE EVER SEEN. IT'S BEYOND BORING
I'M SO SORRY. THIS NIGHTMARE... IS...
FLINCH
I WASN'T CRITICIZING YOU.
BUT IT IS PRETTY PATHETIC.
FLINCH

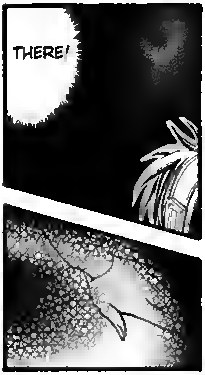
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
IT PROBABLY REFLECTS WHAT'S IN MY HEART...
EVEN THE AIR FEELS HEAVY AND GLOOMY...
I HAVEN'T HAD A SINGLE FRIEND SINCE GRADE SCHOOL...
IT'S SO DEPRESSING...
IT'S TOO LATE TO TRY AND MAKE FRIENDS NOW. EVERYONE JUST IGNORES ME...
I'M NOT GOOD AT TALKING TO PEOPLE. I'M TOO SHY AND INTRO-VERTED...
NO ONE PAYS ANY ATTENTION TO ME.
I'M TERRIBLY LONELY.

JUST NOW! I FELT THE PRESENCE COMING FROM OVER THERE!
TH-THERE!
HOW SAD.
AND NOW THIS NIGHT-MARE...
GASP
FUMP
FUMP
I'LL GO AND TAKE A LOOK.
Stay here.
PLEASE...
I'M SCARED... THERE'S SOMETHING THERE...
FUMP
FUMP
FUMP
THE AIR IS VERY HEAVY.
IT'S HARD TO WALK.
FUMP



SLID
?!

A LINE?

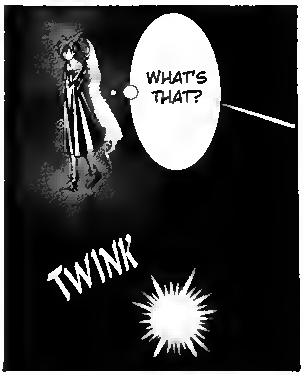

THERE!

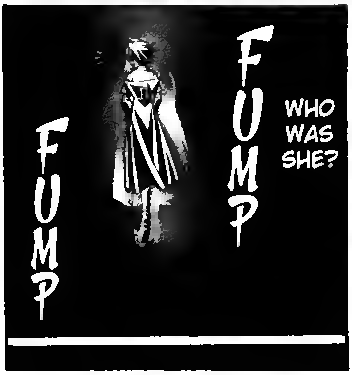
BUT IT'S STILL DARK...

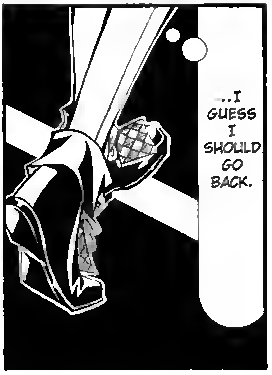
THE AIR FEELS LIGHTER ALL OF A SUDDEN

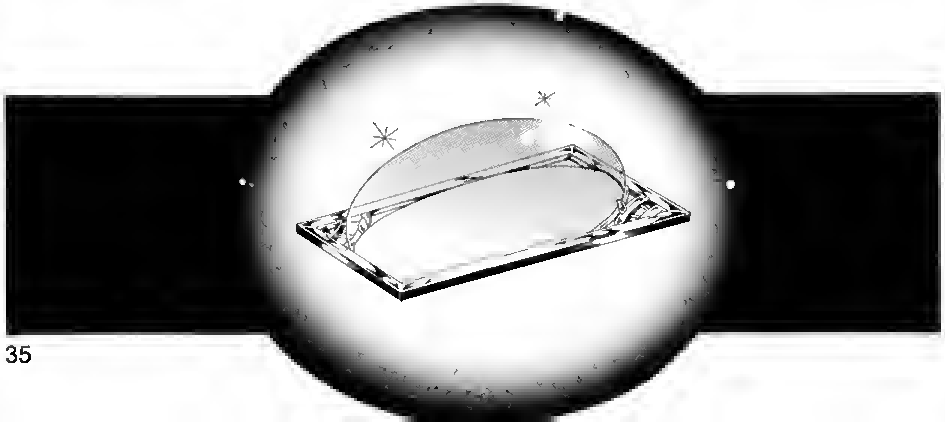
...THE PRESENCE SHE WAS FEELING?
IS THIS ...
WHO ARE YOU? HOW DO YOU KNOW MUMEO?
WHAT?! I HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH HER!
MUMEO?!

SHE MAKES ME SICK!
NEVER MENTION HER TO ME AGAIN.
FWOOSH
SHE DISAPPEARED.


WHAT'S THAT?
TWINK


FUMP
FUMP
WHO WAS SHE?


..I GUESS I SHOULD GO BACK.



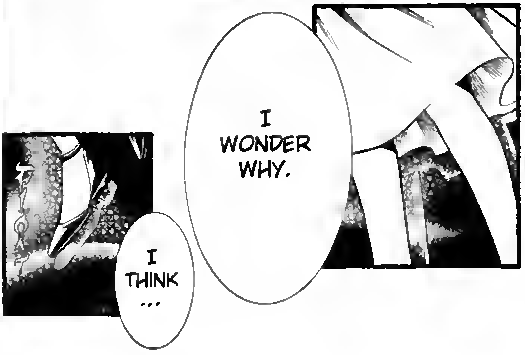
=LOOKING FOR IT?
I NEVER TAKE IT OFF ...
I'VE BEEN LOOKING ALL OVER FOR THIS. MY DEAD MOTHER LEFT IT TO ME.
OH! IT'S THE BROOCH I LOST!
OH, I SEE.
BY THE WAY, AFTER PASSING THIS LINE I DISCOVERED THE PRESENCE YOU FELT. IT WAS A YOUNG GIRL WITH A BEAUTY MARK BY HER MOUTH. SHE DIDN'T SEEM TO LIKE YOU. DO YOU KNOW HER?
HUH?
MUMEO, DON'T YOU WONDER WHY IT'S IN YOUR DREAM?
A BEAUTY MARK...
THAT MUST HAVE BEEN KIYOKO TOMOYA. WE GO TO THE SAME SCHOOL.
WILL YOU TELL ME ABOUT HER?
YES...

BUT SHE DIDN'T CARE FOR ME.
I REALLY WANTED TO BE HER FRIEND.

SHE'S ALWAYS CHEERFUL AND HAS LOTS OF FRIENDS. I WANTED TO BE LIKE HER.

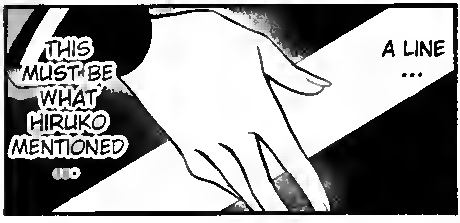
WHAT ?!
HUH?
MY BODY IS FLOATING ...

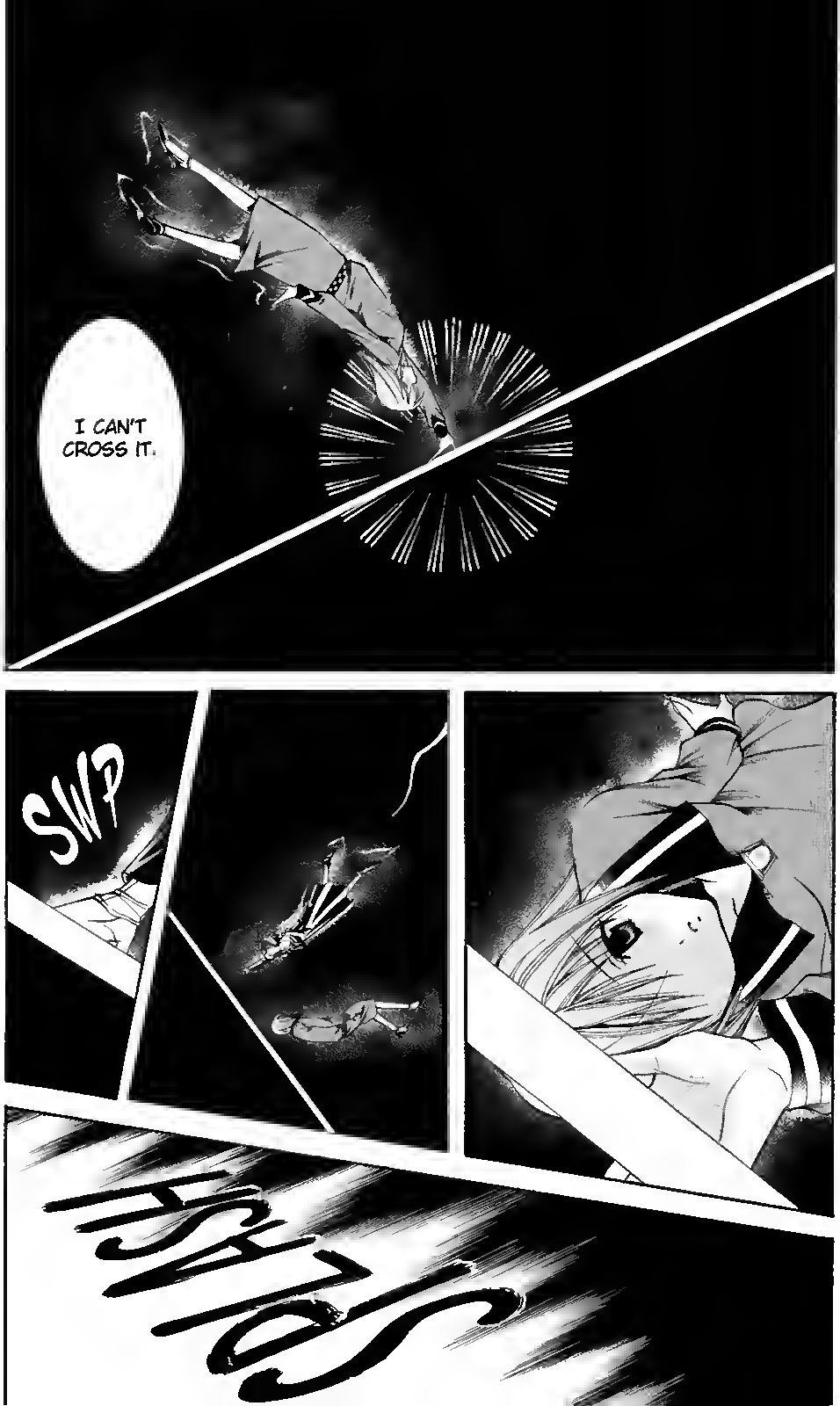
OH! SHE DID INVITE ME TO SPEND A DAY WITH HER ONCE.
WHY IS SHE IN THIS DREAM?

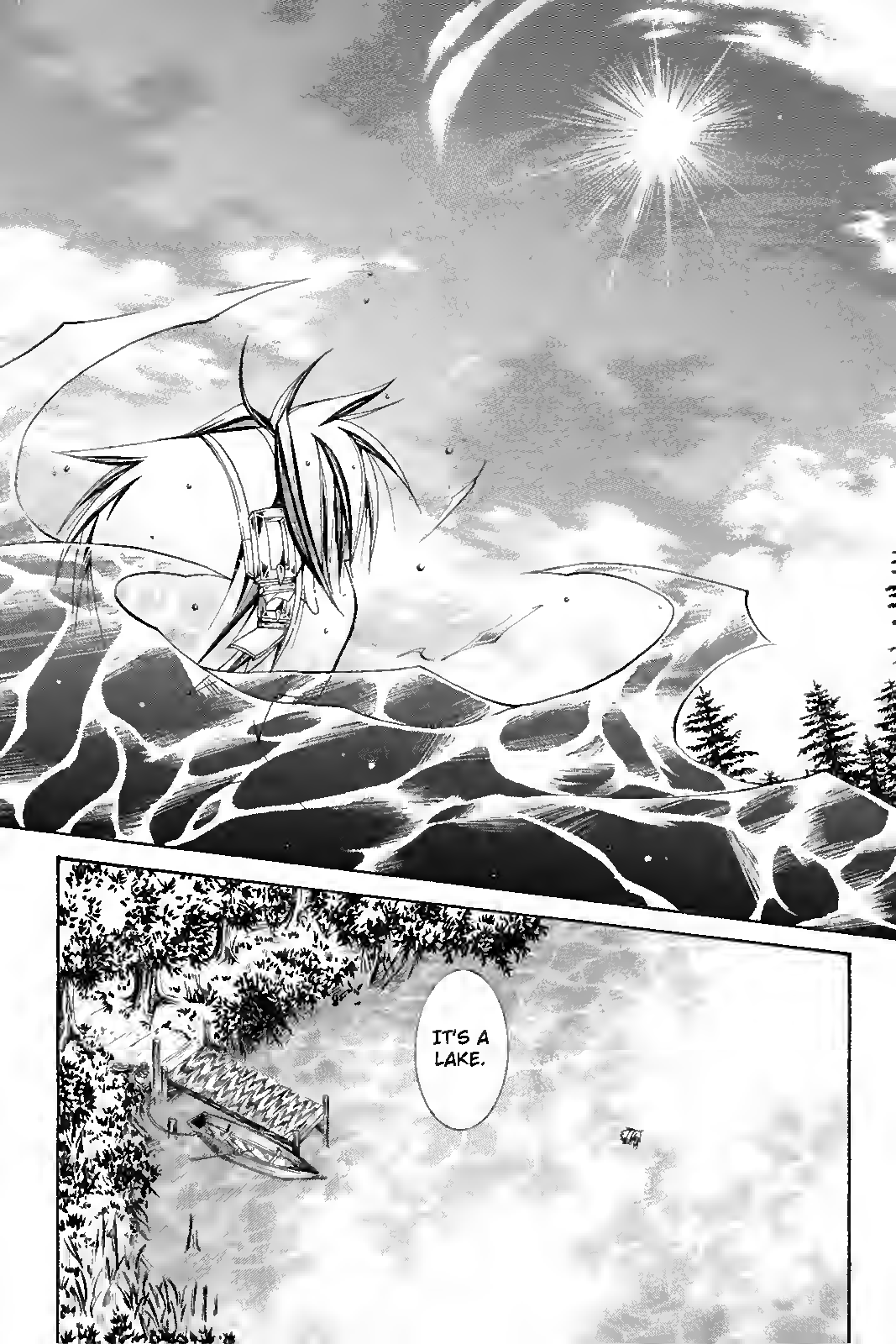

I WONDER WHY.
I THINK ...

THAT'S RIGHT...

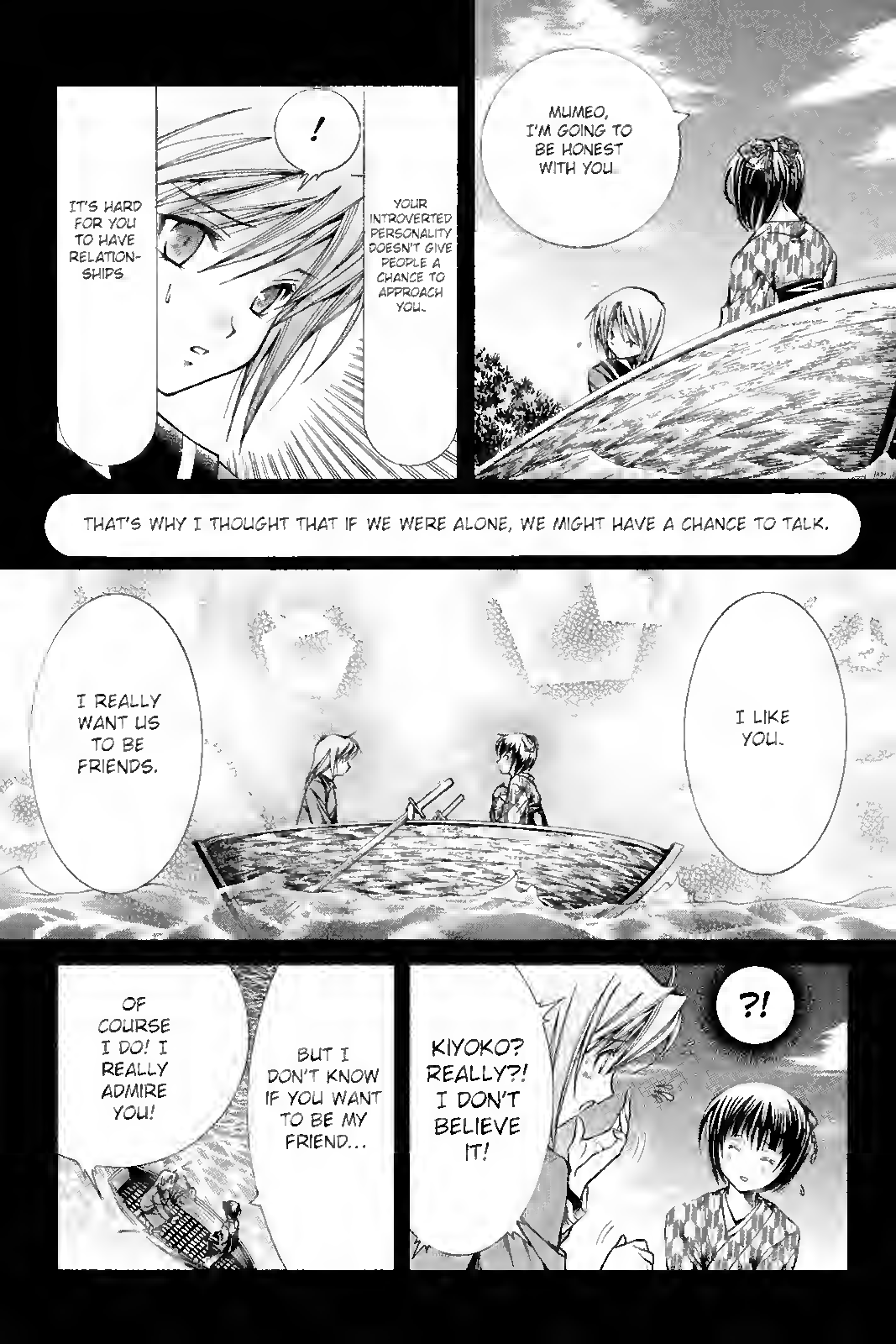
THAT DAY, WE...




I CAN'T CROSS IT.
SWP
SPLASH


IT'S A LAKE.

PLIP
MUMEO, THE OTHER SIDE OF THE LINE...
IT'S A LAKE, ISN'T IT?
I KNOW.
THEN YOU KNOW...
THAT DAY, KIYOKO AND I WENT OUT ON THE LAKE IN A BOAT.
AND SHE SAID...


MUMEO, I'M GOING TO BE HONEST WITH YOU.
!
IT'S HARD FOR YOU TO HAVE RELATION-SHIPS
YOUR INTROVERTED PERSONALITY DOESN'T GIVE PEOPLE A CHANCE TO APPROACH YOU.
THAT'S WHY I THOUGHT THAT IF WE WERE ALONE, WE MIGHT HAVE A CHANCE TO TALK.
I REALLY WANT US TO BE FRIENDS.
I LIKE YOU.
?!
KIYOKO? REALLY?! I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
BUT I DON'T KNOW IF YOU WANT TO BE MY FRIEND...
OF COURSE I DO! I REALLY ADMIRE YOU!

DO YOU REALLY MEAN IT?!
THEN ...
GIVE ME PROOF.
HUH?
I'VE ALWAYS WANTED THAT BROOCH...
BY GIVING ME...
...SOMETHING THAT YOU TREASURE.
I'M SORRY, NOT THIS! MY MOTHER LEFT ME THIS...
WHY NOT?!
ISN'T IT WORTH MY FRIENDSHIP?!
I CAN'T GIVE YOU THIS! NO!
SO YOU DON'T WANT TO BE MY FRIEND?!
SWIPE
NO, IT'S JUST... GIVE IT BA—

NOW I REALIZE THAT KIYOKO NEVER WANTED TO BE MY FRIEND. SHE JUST WANTED MY BROOCH...
GASP
THAT'S RIGHT!
WHY ELSE WOULD I EVEN TALK TO YOU!
I DIDN'T GET IT, SO I HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH YOU OR WITH WHAT HAPPENED THAT DAY!
THAT'S WHAT THE REAL YOU WOULD SAY TOO.
GASP
?

I DIDN'T MAKE ANY FRIENDS AND I'LL STILL BE ALONE...

KIYOKO WAS RIGHT. I'M TOO GLOOMY TO HAVE RELATIONSHIPS...

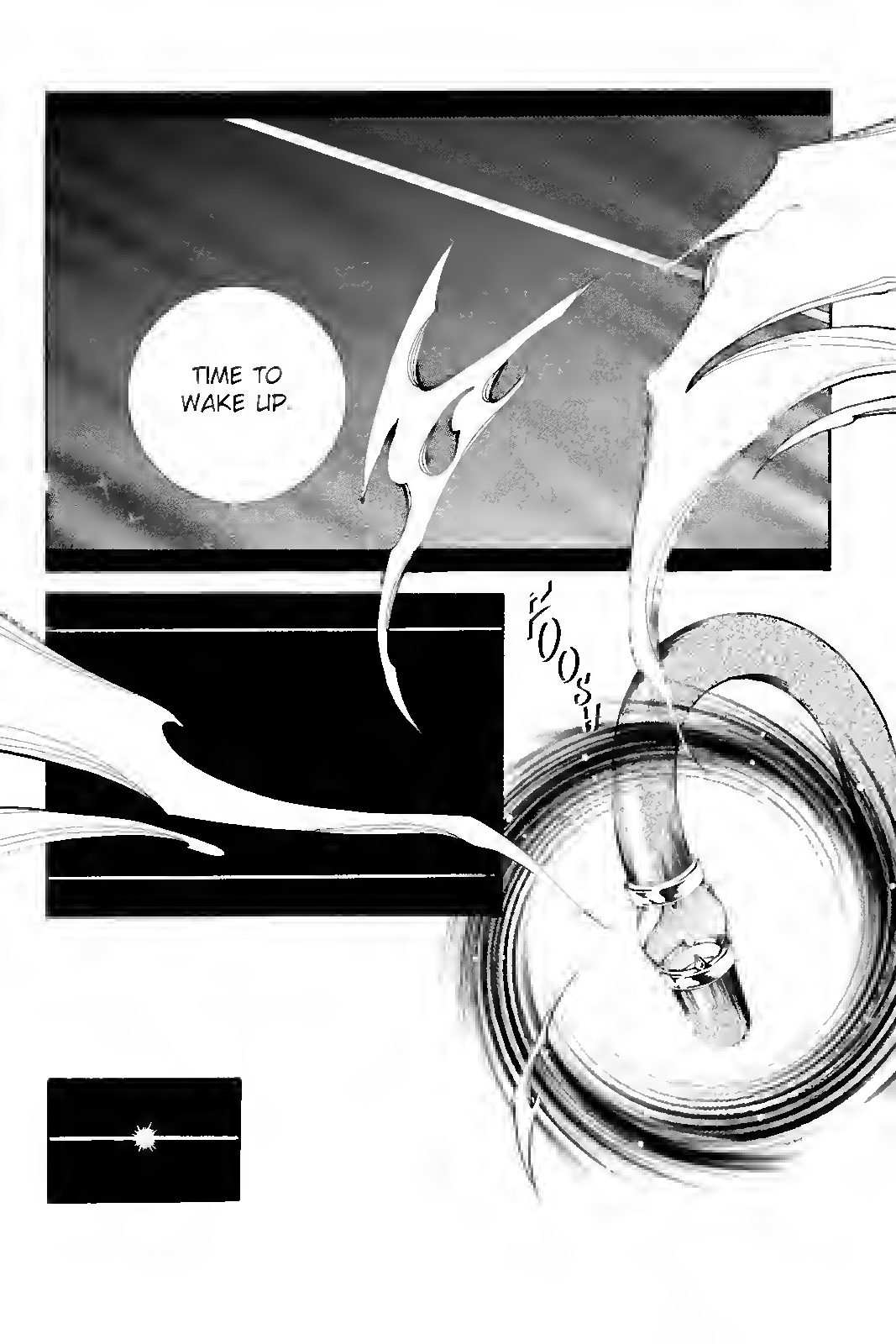
A LONER WHO CAN'T CROSS THE LINE OF SOLITUDE. A LONER WHO WILL DROWN IN DARKNESS...

ARE YOU SURE? IF YOU GO BACK NOW YOU'LL STILL BE ALONE.

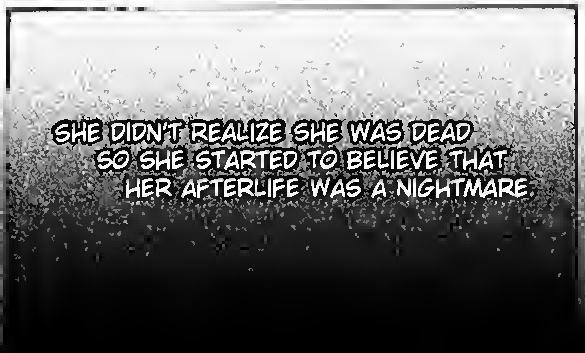
HIRUKO, I DON'T CARE ANYMORE... LET'S GO BACK.

YES. AT LEAST HERE I HAD YOU.

IT'S ALL RIGHT NOW ...
BUT ...


TIME TO
WAKE UP.
FOOSH!

HIRUKO'S BACK!
WHAT HAPPENED LAST NIGHT?
THERE WAS NO CUSTOMER HERE, BUT YOU WAVED YOUR CANE AND DISAPPEARED!
AND LOOK, IT'S EMPTY!
THAT WAS WEIRD!
...
I DID HAVE A CUSTOMER.
A CUSTOMER? THAT I COULDN'T SEE?
BUT I GUESS YOU COULDN'T SEE HER...
DOES HE MEAN...!
Naomu, is that what you saw?!
MEOW
DID SOMETHING COME AGAIN?!


SHE DIDN'T REALIZE SHE WAS DEAD
SO SHE STARTED TO BELIEVE THAT
HER AFTERLIFE WAS A NIGHTMARE.

YES, ONE OF THOSE THINGS.
The last one was a cat though.

MUMEO DOVE IN AFTER IT. THEN...
SPLOOSH

AND THE BROOCH MUST HAVE FALLEN INTO THE LAKE.
THEY MUST HAVE STRUGGLED THAT DAY.

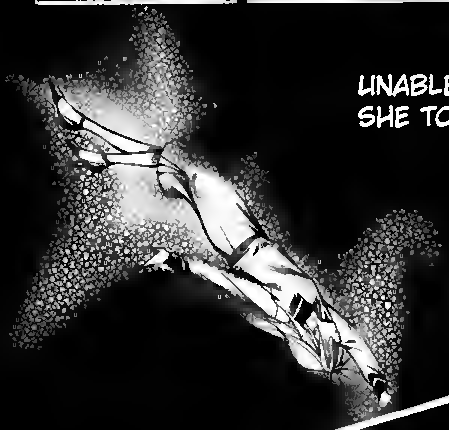
SHE MUST HAVE ...

...DEEP IN THE DARK AND HEAVY WATER.

AND SHE AND HER BROOCH WERE BELOW IT...

THE LINE IN HER DREAM REPRESENTED THE SURFACE OF THE LAKE.

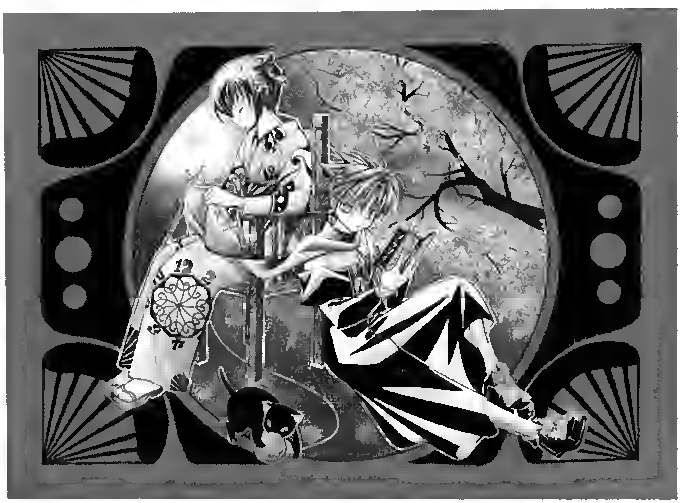
SEPARATING ABOVE AND BELOW THE WATER SURFACE.



UNABLE TO CROSS THE LINE TO COME BACK UP, SHE TOOK HER LAST GASPS OF BREATH.

...NEVER TO RETURN TO OUR WORLD AGAIN...

The Twenty-Ninth Night: Flying Carp

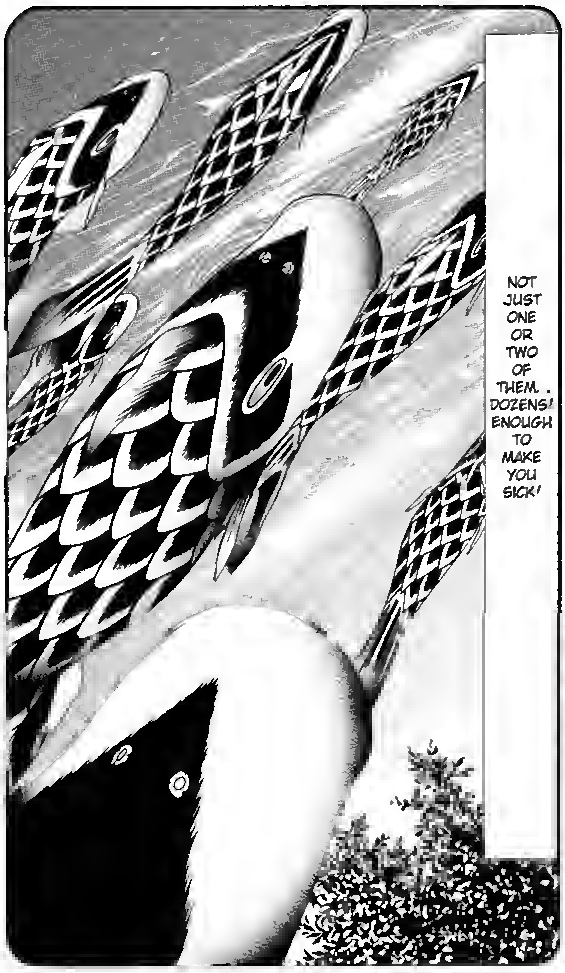


I WENT FOR A WALK THIS AFTERNOON AND SAW THE FLYING CARPS* DANCING IN THE SKY OUTSIDE ALL THE HOUSES.
UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS...
THEY COME TO THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE...
...SEEKING SOLACE...
TEA ROOM
*CALLED "KOINOBORI," THESE CARP-SHAPED BANNERS CELEBRATE BOY'S DAY (NOW CALLED CHILDREN'S DAY) IN MAY. HOUSEHOLDS WITH MALE CHILDREN HANG THEM IN FRONT OF THEIR HOUSES
I GUESS IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN. DID YOU HAVE THEM AT YOUR HOUSE?
YES, WE HAD IT SPECIALLY MADE SO IT WOULD STAND OUT. IT LOOKS LIKE THIS...
DING
OH...

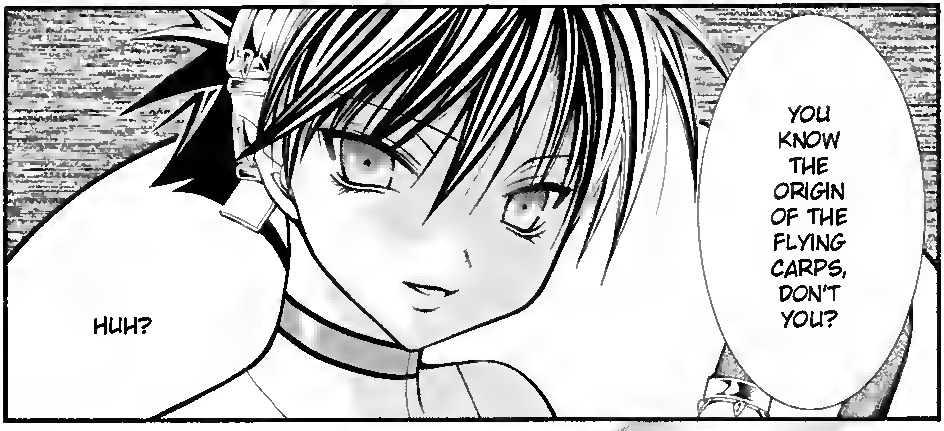
GOOD EVENING.
I'M SUEICHI MIGURIYA.
SORRY TO COME BY SO LATE, BUT I CAME FROM FAR AWAY. I CAME ABOUT A NIGHTMARE...
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. PLEASE, SIT DOWN.

SO, SUEICHI, TELL ME ABOUT YOUR NIGHT-MARE.
I HAVE IT EVERY YEAR AROUND THE TIME OF THE BOY'S FESTIVAL.

IN IT, THERE ARE FLYING CARPS ...
THEY'RE NOT TIED DOWN— THEY'RE JUST SWIMMING FREELY IN THE SKY OVER THE RIVER


NOT JUST ONE OR TWO OF THEM. . DOZENS! ENOUGH TO MAKE YOU SICK!

...IS THAT REALLY ALL YOUR NIGHTMARE IS?
CAN YOU HELP ME, HIRUKO?!
THE THOUGHT OF HAVING THE SAME NIGHTMARE AGAIN THIS YEAR WAS SO DAUNTING...


HUH?
YOU KNOW THE ORIGIN OF THE FLYING CARPS, DON'T YOU?

CLACK
HEH. LOOKS LIKE THERE'S MORE TO THIS...
CLACK
LET'S TAKE A LOOK.

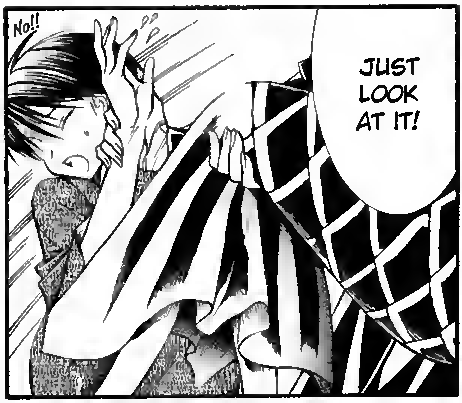
SLEEP NOW... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.

SUEICHI, DO YOU KNOW THIS RIVER?
THERE ARE SO MANY... I FEEL NAUSEOUS.

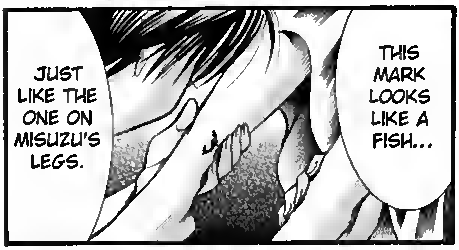
THERE... LOOK OVER THERE.
HUH?
AH, FOUND IT.
HMM.
YES, IT'S IN MY HOMETOWN. I USED TO PLAY HERE WHEN I WAS LITTLE.
AH!

WHAT THE—?!
THERE ARE LEGS COMING OUT OF THAT ONE! HUMAN LEGS!
WAIT...
I'VE SEEN THAT BEFORE, YEARS AGO...
WOBBLE
THAT'S RIGHT... IT MADE ME FEEL SICK...
...SO I TRIED TO ERASE IT FROM MY MEMORY.
THAT'S STRANGE...
THE LEGS USED TO BE SHORTER...
WHICH MEANS...
THEY'RE GROWING!

HIRUKO... IS THERE SOMEONE IN THERE?
WILL YOU GO AND LOOK?
FFOO
...I CAN'T SEE ANYTHING
HIRUKO.

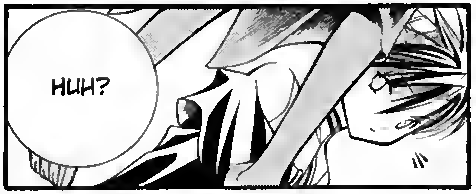

No!!
JUST LOOK AT IT!

THIS ...
OH!


JUST LIKE THE ONE ON MISUZU'S LEGS.
THIS MARK LOOKS LIKE A FISH...

...ARE MISUZU'S?
DOES THAT MEAN THESE LEGS ...

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?


HUH?

WHAT—?! DON'T BRING IT HERE!
TAKE A LOOK AT THIS!
FU-TTO

SHE WAS A CHILDHOOD FRIEND. SHE WAS A LITTLE STRANGE.
WHO'S MISUZU? SO YOU KNOW WHOSE LEGS THESE ARE?
UM... YES...
ONE BOY'S FESTIVAL SHE TOOK THE FLYING CARP FROM OUR HOUSE WITHOUT ASKING.
AND HUNG IT ABOVE THE RIVER LIKE IN THIS DREAM.
MISUZU. WHY DID YOU DO THIS?

DO YOU KNOW THE ORIGIN OF THE FLYING CARPS?
IT WAS FOR YOU.
Tee Hee
THE CARP SYMBOLIZES BOYS OVERCOMING ADVERSITY TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS IN THEIR LIFE.
THE STORY IS THAT THE CARP SWAM UPSTREAM AGAINST THE STRONG CURRENT. WHEN IT MADE IT SUCCESSFULLY, IT TURNED INTO A DRAGON
I'M NOT BRAVE ENOUGH TO BE A CARP.
YOUR HAPPINESS IS MY HAPPINESS ...
I'M HOPING FOR YOUR FUTURE HAPPINESS.
SO BY HANGING THE FLYING CARP OVER THE RIVER LIKE THIS...
Tee Hee

THEN I WILL BECOME THE CARP.
I'LL CUT OFF THESE LEGS THAT BIND ME TO THIS EARTH ...
...AND LIKE A CARP, FLY INTO THE HEAVENS, BECOMING A DRAGON I WILL BE THERE FOR YOU.
YOU'LL CUT OFF YOUR LEGS ...
THEN ONE DAY WE'LL BE TOGETHER
WILL YOU ACCEPT ME?
THEN WE CAN BE TOGETHER FOREVER.
NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS...

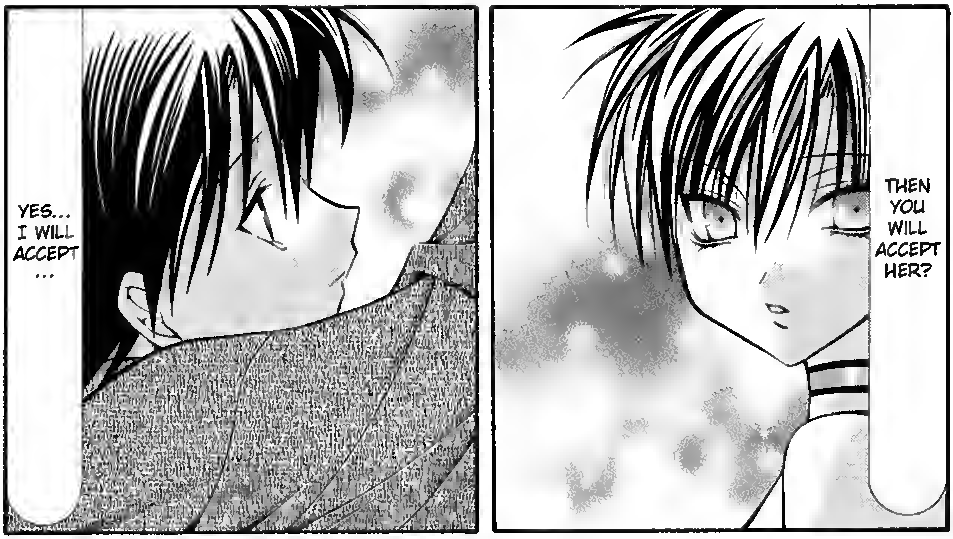
RUSTLE
...NOT NORMAL.
YES. FOR YOUR SAKE... IT'S NOTHING...
EVEN CUTTING OFF MY LEGS...
THE WAY SHE EXPRESSES HER LOVE IS OVER-THE-TOP. IT'S...
...
DOES SHE MEAN MARRIAGE? THAT'S NOT WHAT I WANT...
SNAP
AH, THE FLYING CARP!
DASH
MISUZU! IT'S DANGEROUS!
SPLASH
COME BACK! I'LL GO!
THE CURRENT'S TOO STRONG!
NO!
!

THEY FOUND HER BODY DOWNSTREAM A FEW DAYS LATER.

THEY CONCLUDED FROM THE SIZE AND THE MARKING THAT THEY WERE MISUZU'S.
BUT... I COULDN'T ACCEPT HER DEATH.
JUST HER LEGS.
BUT IT WASN'T HER WHOLE BODY...
IS SHE LIVING SOMEWHERE, WAITING FOR ME?!
OR DID SHE CUT OFF HER LEGS LIKE SHE SAID SHE WOULD?
DID SHE REALLY DIE?!
SO I TRIED MY BEST NOT TO THINK ABOUT IT.
AS IF THAT COULD ACTUALLY HAPPEN!
RIDICULOUS!

I TOLD MYSELF THAT SHE DROWNED AND HER BODY WAS EATEN BY THE FISH.
BUT THIS MUST MEAN THAT YOU STILL HAVEN'T ACCEPTED HER DEATH.
THEY'RE THE FISH THAT ATE HER BODY ...
THAT'S WHY THERE ARE SO MANY FLYING CARPS.
I DIDN'T EVEN MOURN YOUR DEATH.
LOOKING BACK, I TRAMPLED ON YOUR FEELINGS FOR ME.
...HAVE GROWN.
YES... AND THESE LEGS...
PLIP
MISUZU.

I'M...
I'M SORRY, MISUZU.
...YOU'VE LIVED ON IN THIS MISERABLE FORM!
THAT'S WHY, IN MY NIGHT-MARES...
DEEP DOWN, I DIDN'T LET YOU GO.
"THEN I WILL BECOME THE CARP."
YOUR WORDS TIED YOU TO THIS WORLD LIKE A ROPE...
I'LL LET YOU GO TO A BETTER PLACE...
LET'S UNTIE IT.




I WILL ACCEPT HER DEATH...

GOOD-BYE, MISUZU.
RETURN TO THE HEAVENS.
SNIFF

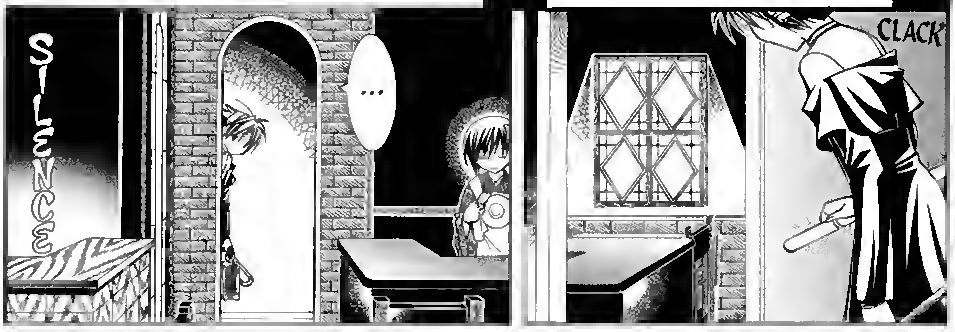
...
THANK YOU, HIRUKO. I CAN SAY GOOD-BYE TO THIS DREAM NOW.
TIME TO WAKE UP.
FOOSH

I CAN BELIEVE SOMEONE COULD LOVE THAT MUCH.
FOR THE ONE SHE LOVED...
MAYBE MISUZU REALLY DID CUT OFF HER OWN LEGS.
HE ALSO ACCEPTED HER WORDS THAT SHE WOULD BECOME A CARP.
HE ACCEPTED MISUZU'S DEATH, BUT ON THE OTHER HAND...
HUH?
HEH HEH
WAS IT REALLY ONLY SUEICHI WHO WAS RELEASED?
I'M GLAD SUEICHI COULD FINALLY BE RELEASED FROM HIS GUILT...
HE RELEASED HER FROM HER ROPE...
...AND SOARED INTO THE AIR AS IF SHE HAD TURNED INTO A DRAGON.
THE PROOF IS THAT SHE WAS STILL IN THE SHAPE OF A FLYING CARP...

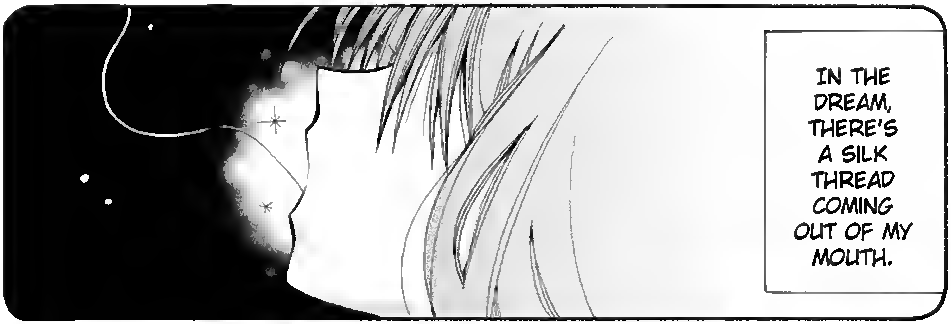
HEH HEH. I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO SUEICHI'S DREAM TONIGHT.
"THEN ONE DAY WE'LL BE TOGETHER!"
Ah.
Ahh
"WILL YOU ACCEPT ME?"
HAS MISUZU COME BACK?!
WHY AM I HERE AGAIN?!
THE FLYING CARPS ARE GONE THOUGH...
IS THAT ...?

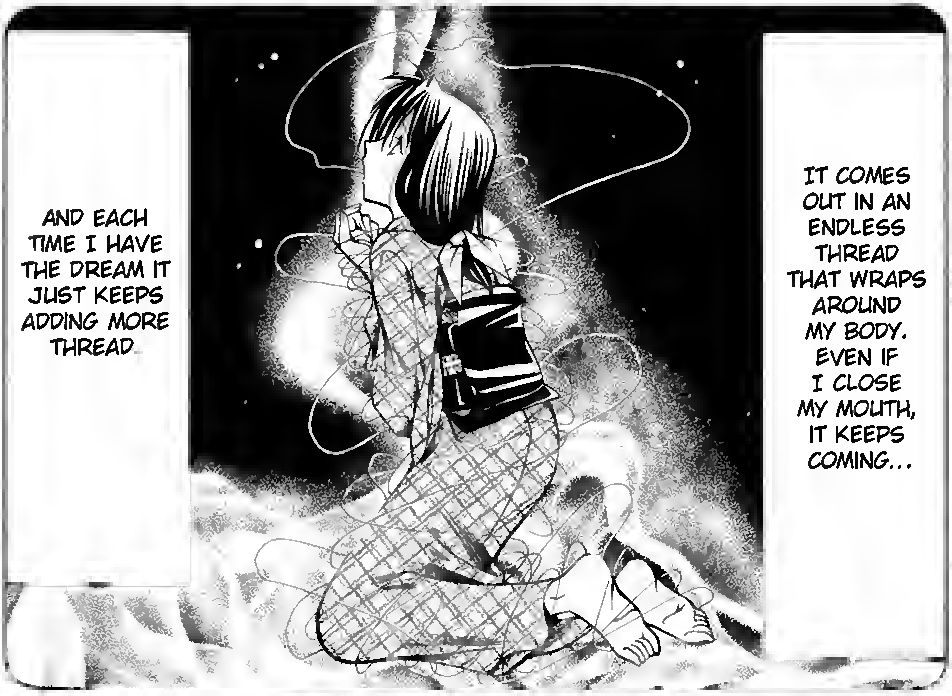
"THEN WE CAN BE TOGETHER FOREVER."
"NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS..."

# The Thirtieth Night: Meta-morphosis

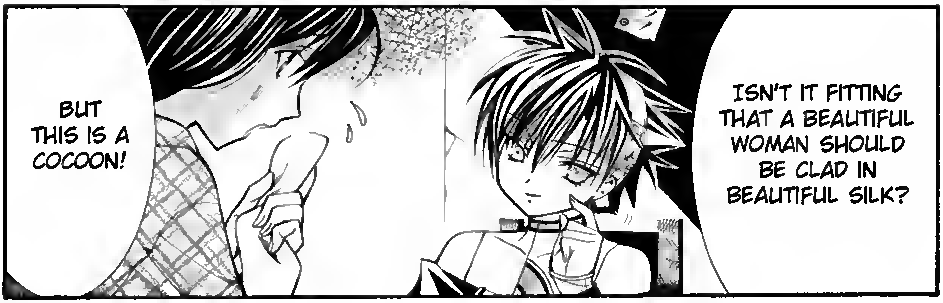


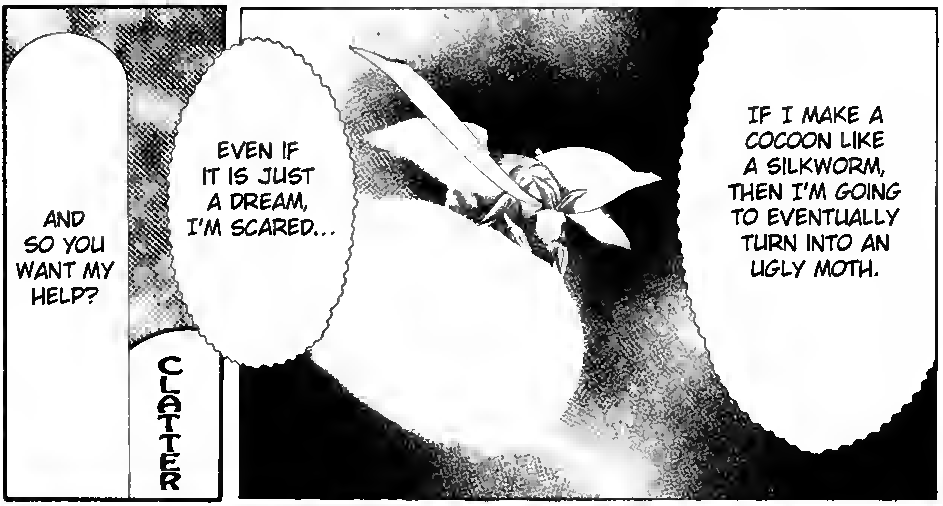
GOOD EVENING. I'M KONO INUZUKA.
IS HIRUKO THE BAKU HERE?
OH...
STARE
IS... IS THERE SOMETHING ON MY FACE?
NO, IT'S JUST THAT YOU'RE SO BEAUTIFUL ...
So sorry.
OH! YOU'RE TOO KIND.
THE THING IS, I'M GETTING MARRIED SOON TO A WONDERFUL MAN. I DON'T THINK I'M WORTHY OF HIM, WHICH IS WHY I'M SO DEPRESSED.
So, thank you.
I'M HAVING THIS TERRIFYING NIGHTMARE WHERE I'M CHANGING... AND AT A TIME LIKE THIS, IT'S REALLY STRESSFUL!


IN THE DREAM, THERE'S A SILK THREAD COMING OUT OF MY MOUTH.


AND EACH TIME I HAVE THE DREAM IT JUST KEEPS ADDING MORE THREAD.
IT COMES OUT IN AN ENDLESS THREAD THAT WRAPS AROUND MY BODY. EVEN IF I CLOSE MY MOUTH, IT KEEPS COMING...

...
IT'S ALMOST FORMED A COMPLETE COCOON...


BUT THIS IS A COCOON!
ISN'T IT FITTING THAT A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN SHOULD BE CLAD IN BEAUTIFUL SILK?


AND SO YOU WANT MY HELP?
CLATTER
EVEN IF IT IS JUST A DREAM, I'M SCARED...
IF I MAKE A COCOON LIKE A SILKWORM, THEN I'M GOING TO EVENTUALLY TURN INTO AN UGLY MOTH.

PERHAPS IN YOUR DREAM, YOU CAN EMERGE FROM YOUR COCOON TO BECOME YOUR TRUE SELF AS WELL.
BUT KONO, LIKE THE MOTH THAT EMERGES FROM THE COCOON, IT SPREADS ITS WINGS AND BECOMES ITS TRUE FORM...

I WANT TO SEE YOUR TRUE FORM.
FWIP
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
SLEEP NOW...
LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.

PLEASE... HELP ME, HIRUKO!
?!
I DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME! THE COCOON IS ALMOST COMPLETE...
NO. KONO, YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S SMALL.
HIRUKO, WHY ARE YOU SO BIG...?!

I WAS ALWAYS ALONE IN MY DREAM SO I NEVER REALIZED...
THIS REALLY IS A COCOON. IF I METAMORPHOSE, I'LL TURN INTO A MOTH...
HEH HEH... THERE'S NOT MUCH WE CAN DO.
N-NO!
NO...
?!
FOOSH

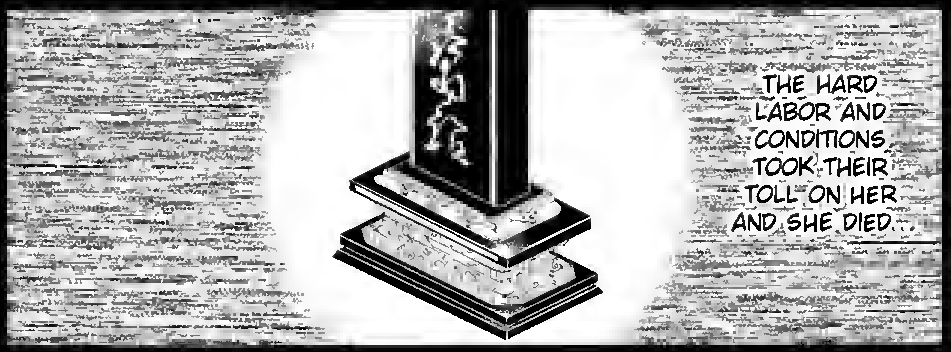
BOILED TO DEATH.

THAT'S HOW YOU KILL THE SILKWORM INSIDE THE COCOON.
THAT VOICE...
KONO... THERE'S A GIRL NEXT TO A LOOM.
SHE'S A FAC-TORY GIRL.

GASP
THAT MEANS...
GASP
IS IT... IOKI?
SHE DIED FOUR YEARS AGO.

DIED?
GASP
IOKI WAS MY OLDER SISTER.
GASP

WHEN SHE WAS 12, SHE WAS SENT TO WORK AT A SILK FACTORY.


THE HARD LABOR AND CONDITIONS TOOK THEIR TOLL ON HER AND SHE DIED...

IF ONLY I WERE HEALTHIER... I SHOULD HAVE GONE, NOT YOU.
FORGIVE ME, IOKI...
WHY ME?!
SHE DIDN'T WANT TO GO ...
YOU GET TO STAY AT HOME! I HATE YOU!
WHY DO I HAVE TO GO?!
I WISH THAT I WAS SICKLY.

IOKI IS DEAD. SHE MUST HATE ME.
GASP
THIS DREAM... SHE'S MAKING ME FEEL THE SAME PAIN SHE FELT...
GASP
IT'S SO HOT...
IT HURTS SO MUCH...
I'M... SORRY... IO...
SOR..
...

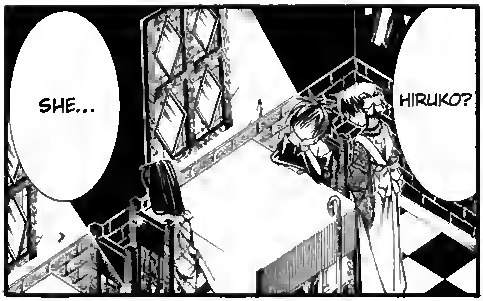
DRY IT.
DRY IT...
KONO IS DEAD ...
THE SILK-WORM IS DEAD ...
REEL IT ON...
SPIN THE THREAD...
BOIL IT...
"KONO" IS BEING WOVEN INTO CLOTH...
SO THAT'S IT...

IT'S SO PRET-TY...
IT WAS WOVEN FROM THE LIES YOU TOLD PRETENDING TO BE YOUR YOUNGER SISTER.
THERE WERE SO MANY LIES THAT THEY MADE A LARGE PIECE OF CLOTH.
BUT NOW I'LL DISCARD IT LIKE AN OLD RAG.
LIES?
PRE-TENDING?
I CAN NO LONGER BEAR THE WEIGHT OF MY GUILT.
THESE LIES I'VE COVERED MY BODY IN... IT'S TIME TO TAKE THEM OFF.

RIP
I WASN'T THE ONE INDENTURED AT AGE 12...
RIP
IT WASN'T ME WHO DIED FOUR YEARS AGO...
RIP
I WAS NEVER THIS GIRL...
RIP
RIP

I HAVE TO ACCEPT THE REAL ME ...

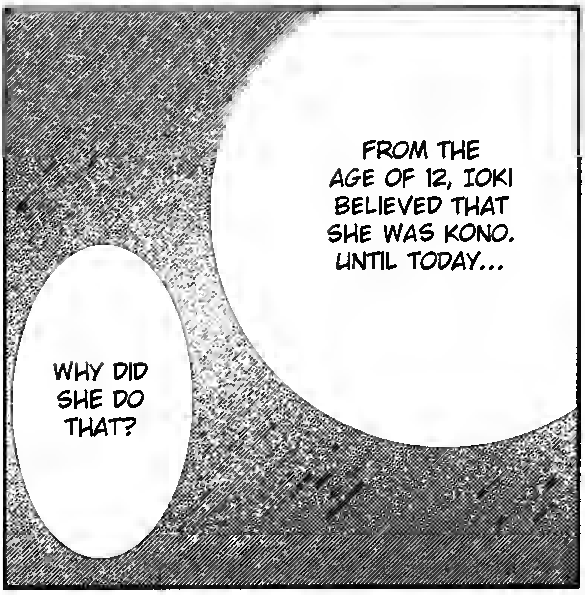
SAY GOODBYE TO KONO...
TIME TO WAKE UP.


SHE...
HIRUKO?

WHAT HAPPENED?

THE OLDER SISTER, IOKI?!
SHE ISN'T KONO. SHE'S IOKI.

THAT'S WHEN MY PARENTS TOLD ME I WAS BEING SENT TO A FACTORY.
BECAUSE ...


FROM THE AGE OF 12, IOKI BELIEVED THAT SHE WAS KONO. UNTIL TODAY...
WHY DID SHE DO THAT?

BUT I DIDN'T GO. MY TWIN SISTER, "KONO," WENT INSTEAD.
WHY ME?!
I DIDN'T WANT TO BE SENT TO A FACTORY FOR SEVEN YEARS...
YOU GET TO STAY AT HOME! I HATE YOU!
WHY DO I HAVE TO GO?!
I WISH THAT I WAS SICKLY.
WHAT ?
IT'S ALL RIGHT, IOKI... I'LL GO INSTEAD.
YOU'RE RIGHT. WE'RE SO SIMILAR THAT NO ONE WOULD NOTICE
WE'RE TWINS! WHY DO ONLY I HAVE TO GO?

I DON'T WANT YOU TO SUFFER.
I'VE ALWAYS BEEN JEALOUS OF YOUR HEALTH.
EXACTLY... I'M NOT GOING TO LIVE LONG ANYWAY.
BUT YOU CAN'T. YOU'RE TOO WEAK...
YOU'LL STAY HERE AND LIVE AS KONO.
FROM NOW ON I'M IOKI. I'LL GO TO THE FACTORY.
I... I...
OKAY? IT'LL BE OUR SECRET, "KONO"...
I TOOK ADVANTAGE OF HER OFFER...
EVENTUALLY KONO GOT EVEN SICKER AND DIED...

I'VE NEVER REVEALED THE TRUTH...
I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS.
I LIVED AS KONO...
IF ONLY I WERE HEALTHIER... I SHOULD HAVE GONE, NOT YOU.
FORGIVE ME, IOKI...
...SPINNING LIES...
AND ...
THEN YOU REALLY DID BELIEVE THAT YOU WERE KONO.
FOR-GETTING YOUR GUILT, THE LIES JUST WRAPPED AROUND YOU...
...AND BECAME THIS NIGHT-MARE...

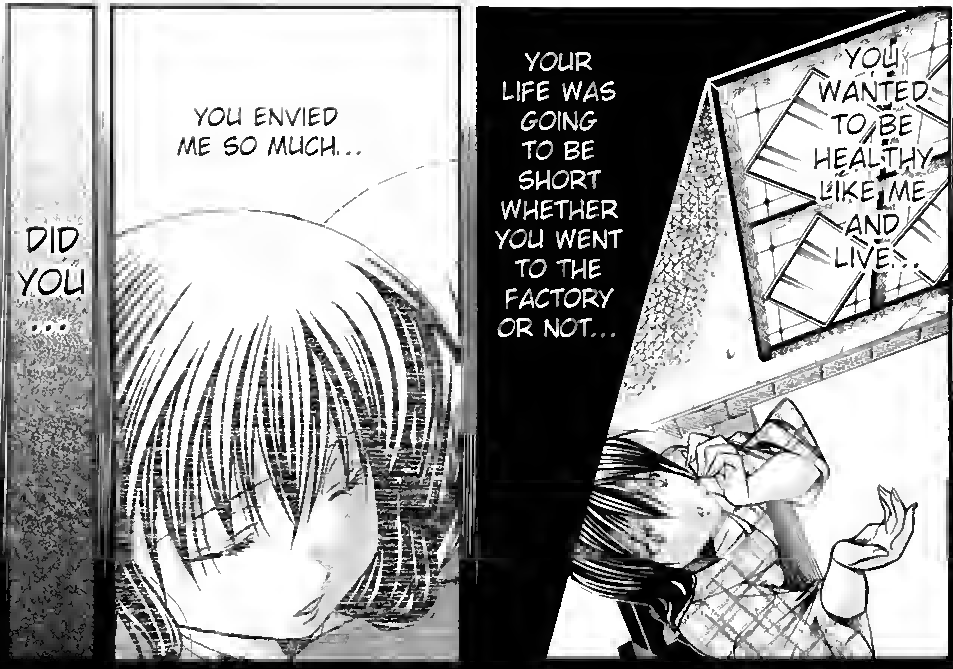
CLAP
CONGRATULATIONS, IOKI.
CLAP
...AND FINALLY ACCEPTED YOURSELF AS IOKI.
YOU KILLED THE FAKE KONO TO PURGE YOUR GUILT...
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
YOU GOT YOUR CONSCIENCE BACK AND METAMORPHOSED INTO THE TRUE YOU.
HE SAYS HE LIKES HOW KIND AND GENTLE I AM. BUT...
TO A WONDERFUL MAN.
I'M GETTING MARRIED SOON
CLAP
CLAP

I'LL HAVE TO LIVE MY LIFE AS KONO...
NO MATTER HOW MUCH I LOVE HIM, HE'LL NEVER KNOW THE TRUE ME.
HIS AFFECTION ... HIS SMILE ... IT'S ALL FOR KONO!
BUT HE DOESN'T MEAN ME!
...SO DO I TELL THE TRUTH?
I CAN'T. EVERYONE HAS BURIED IOKI IN THEIR MINDS!
IOKI INUZUKA
I'M ALREADY DEAD!
IT'S MY NAME ON THAT GRAVE STONE...
WHO AM I?!
THEN...
GASP
I'M JUST PROOF THAT I DIED AND KONO LIVES...

I DIED... AND KONO LIVED.

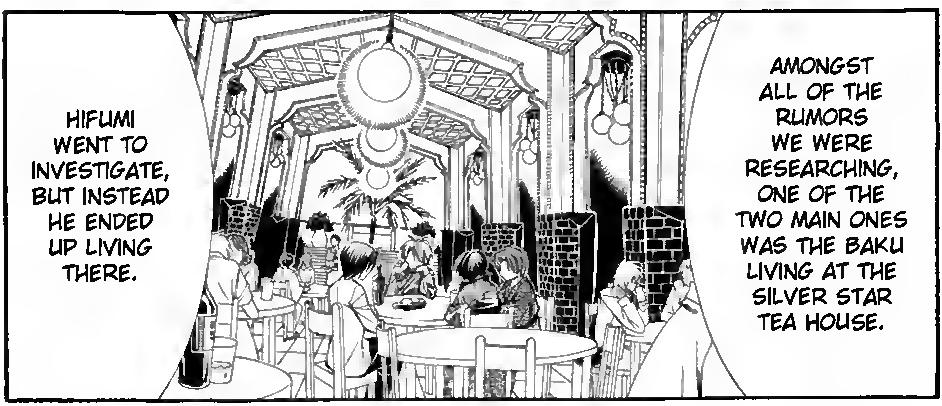
I DON'T WANT YOU TO SUFFER.
I'VE ALWAYS BEEN JEALOUS OF YOUR HEALTH.
EXACTLY... I'M NOT GOING TO LIVE LONG ANYWAY.
BUT YOU CAN'T! YOU'RE TOO WEAK..

KONO...

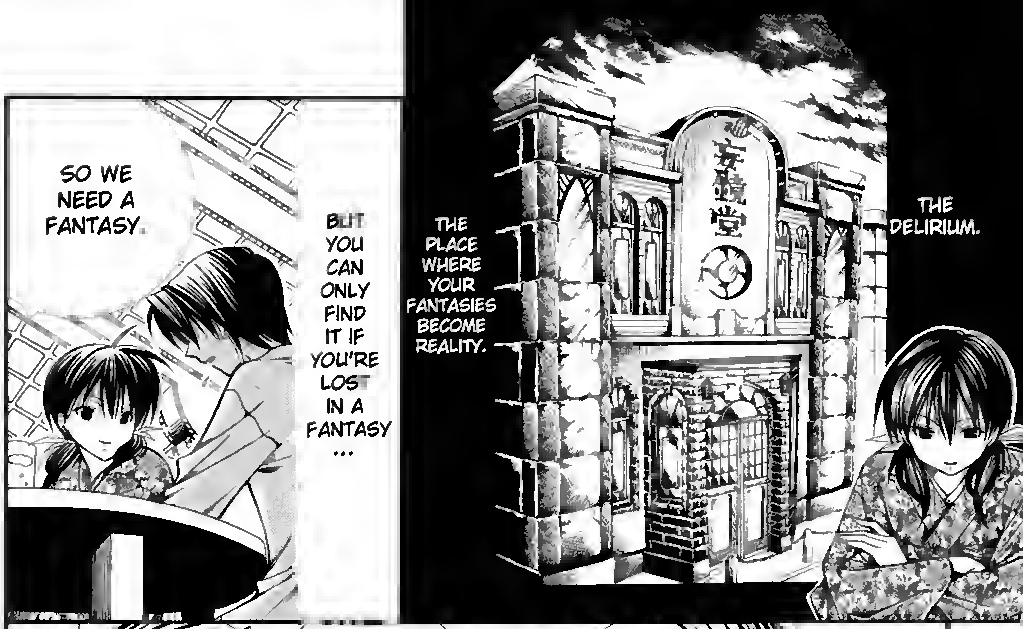

DID YOU...
YOU ENVIED ME SO MUCH...
YOUR LIFE WAS GOING TO BE SHORT WHETHER YOU WENT TO THE FACTORY OR NOT...
YOU WANTED TO BE HEALTHY LIKE ME AND LIVE...

...INTEND TO WIPE OUT MY EXISTENCE AND EXTEND YOUR OWN?

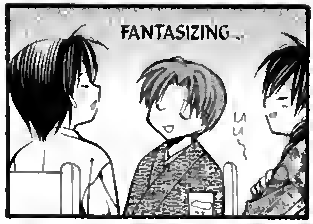
# The Thirty-First Night: Like-Minded

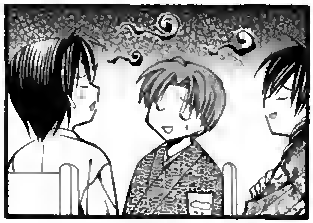

HIFUMI WENT TO INVESTIGATE, BUT INSTEAD HE ENDED UP LIVING THERE.
AMONGST ALL OF THE RUMORS WE WERE RESEARCHING, ONE OF THE TWO MAIN ONES WAS THE BAKU LIVING AT THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE.

NOW FOR THE OTHER RUMOR THAT WE STILL NEED TO CONFIRM...
I tried, but he hit me.
IS IT TRUE THAT SLEEPING ON THE BAKU'S SKIN PROTECTS YOU FROM BAD LUCK?


SO WE NEED A FANTASY.
BUT YOU CAN ONLY FIND IT IF YOU'RE LOST IN A FANTASY ...
THE PLACE WHERE YOUR FANTASIES BECOME REALITY.
THE DELIRIUM.

HMM ... LET ME SEE ...
WELL, WE CAN TRY.
WE JUST NEED TO FANTASIZE ABOUT A WISH THAT WE'RE DESPERATE TO MAKE REAL.


FANTASIZING...



I DON'T NEED TO FANTASIZE. 'CAUSE ONE DAY I'LL MARRY MIZUKI AND WE'LL...
HMPH, THAT'S SO POINT-LESS.

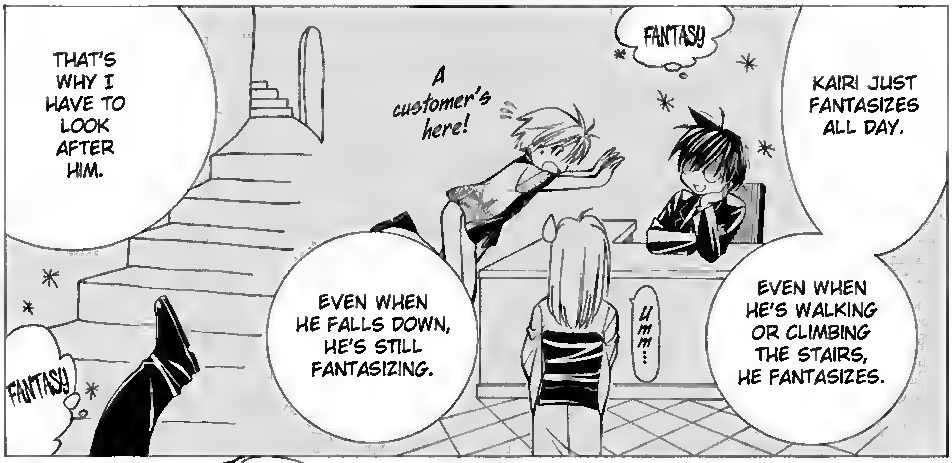
Ah... It's no use.
EVERYTHING I THINK OF WOULD BE RIDICULOUS IN REALITY.
HEH HEH... OH, NEXT MONTH?
HA HA... THERE'S SO MUCH TO PLAN.
LOOKS LIKE HIFUMI'S GONE TO FANTASY LAND...
DO YOU THINK HE'S GOING TO END UP AT THE DELIRIUM?
Ha ha... NO WAY.
I CAN'T WAIT, MIZUKI. ♡
SUNCH
EVERY-ONE!
I'M GETTING MARRIED NEXT MONTH!
LATER
?!

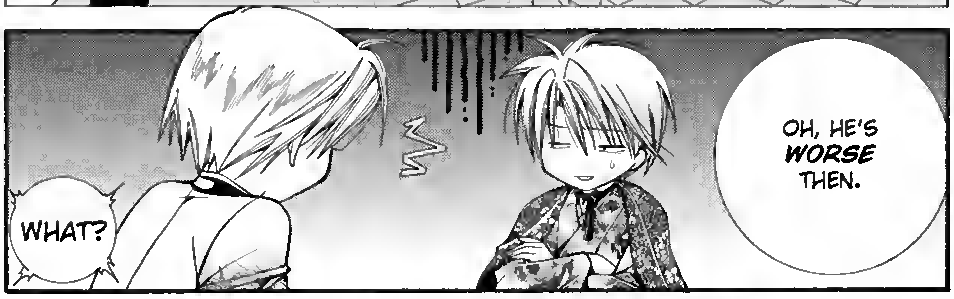
IT'S GOING TO BE SO GREAT...
THAT'S RIGHT. WE'LL NEED TO TALK TO OUR FAMILIES FIRST...
YAWN
EVERYONE WILL BE SO HAPPY FOR US.
THE SMELL OF PERFUME WAFTING IN THE AIR...
HUH? WHERE AM I?
I DON'T REMEMBER THIS STREET.

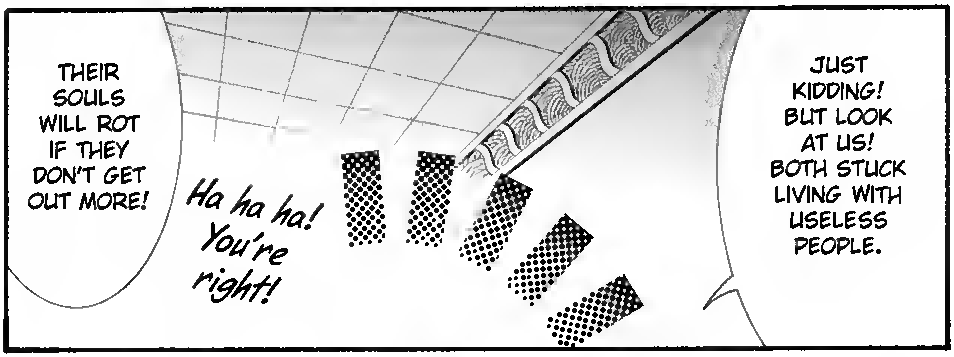
ZZZ
ZZZ
CHUD
...MUGH...
MUST'VE DRUNK TOO..
TOTTER
UHN.
DING
..
SLURP
WHEN YOU'RE HUNG OVER, WATER TASTES LIKE HONEY!
GASP

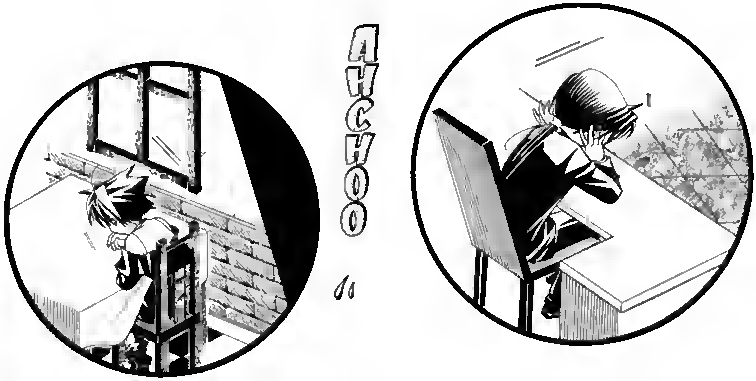
?!
WHERE AM I...?
I'M REALLY HERE!
SO THIS IS THE PLACE...!
THIS IS THE DELIRIUM. I FOUND YOU PASSED OUT ON THE STREET.
THE DELIRIUM ?!
ARE YOU THE OWNER?
IS THAT ONE OF THE ROOMS?!

I LOOK AFTER HIM.
LOOK AFTER?
NOPE, THAT'S KAIRI. HE'S DOWNSTAIRS.
YUP, YUP! THE PLACE WHERE I'M LIVING HAS SOMEONE JUST LIKE THAT!
HUH?
SLAP
I GET IT! IN A UNIQUE PLACE LIKE THIS, THE OWNER MUST BE A GLOOMY, OBSESSIVE SORT WHO'S REALLY TROUBLESOME!
HE ACTS AS IF EVERY DAY IS A CURSE.
You should go out and enjoy the sun.
Mmm... I want some delicious nightmares.
HE SHUTS HIMSELF IN HIS ROOM DURING THE DAY...
It hurts. The sun hurts.
IF THE WEATHER IS NICE, HE FEELS ILL.
AND ALL HE TALKS ABOUT IS NIGHTMARES.
OH, HE DOES SOUND A BIT LIKE KAIRI.
CLAP

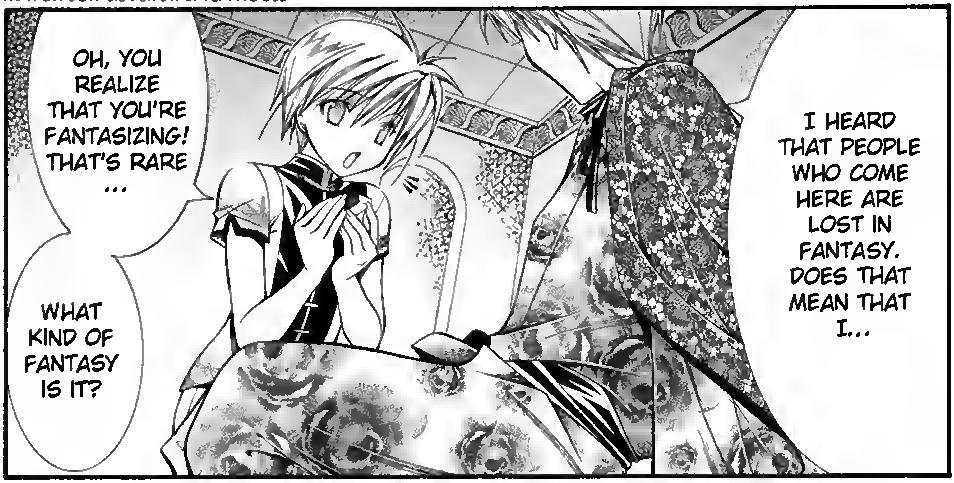

THAT'S WHY I HAVE TO LOOK AFTER HIM.
A customer's here!
FANTASY
KAIRI JUST FANTASIZES ALL DAY.
EVEN WHEN HE FALLS DOWN, HE'S STILL FANTASIZING.
Umm...
EVEN WHEN HE'S WALKING OR CLIMBING THE STAIRS, HE FANTASIZES.
FANTASY


WHAT?
OH, HE'S WORSE THEN.

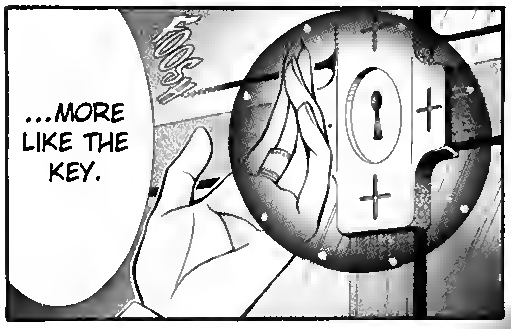

THEIR SOULS WILL ROT IF THEY DON'T GET OUT MORE!
Ha ha ha! You're right!
JUST KIDDING! BUT LOOK AT US! BOTH STUCK LIVING WITH USELESS PEOPLE.


AHCHOO

MATCH BOX SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE


OH, YOU REALIZE THAT YOU'RE FANTASIZING! THAT'S RARE ...
WHAT KIND OF FANTASY IS IT?
I HEARD THAT PEOPLE WHO COME HERE ARE LOST IN FANTASY. DOES THAT MEAN THAT I...

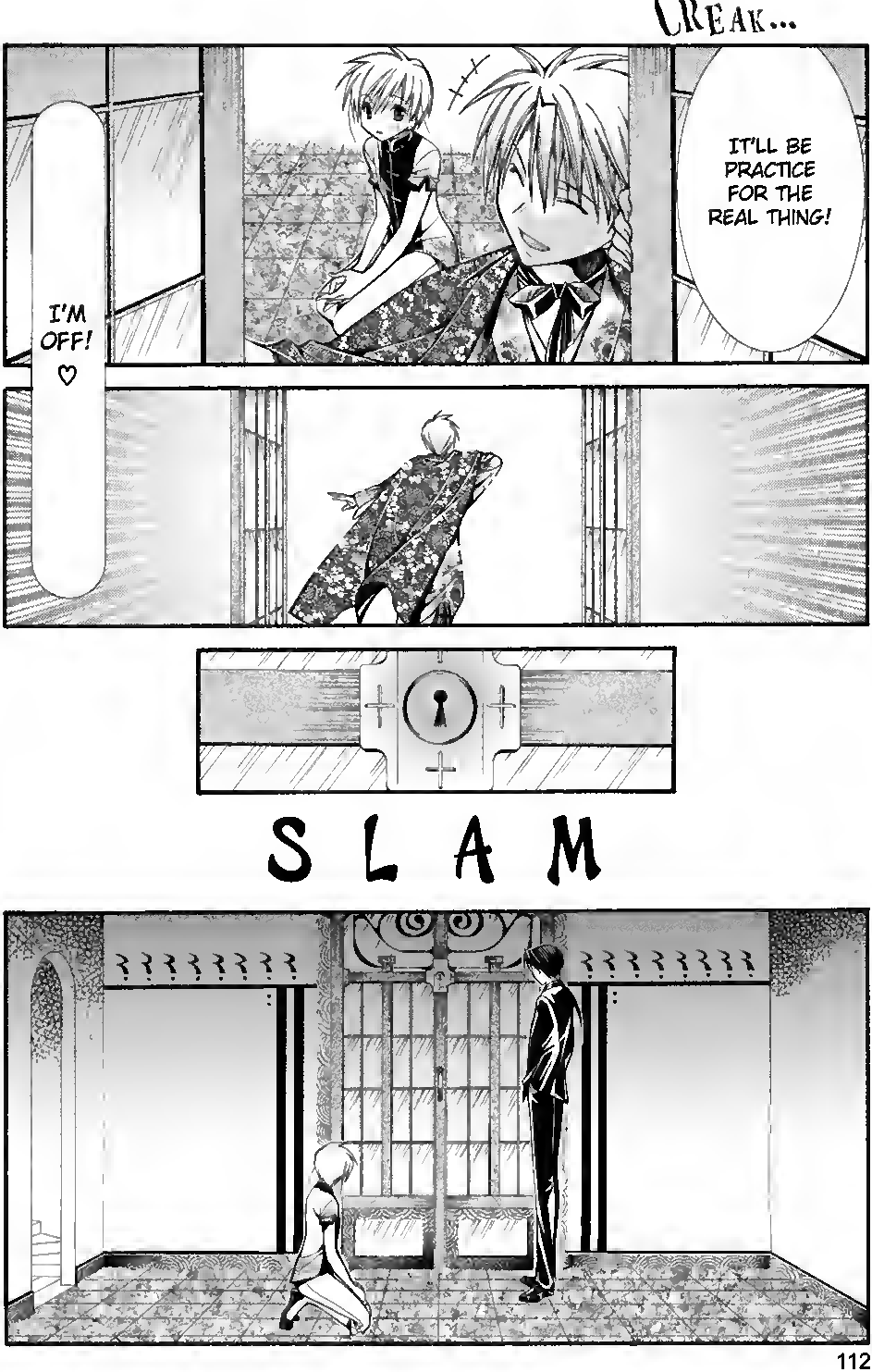
KAIRI.
OH! YOU'RE THE OWNER?!


...MORE LIKE THE KEY.

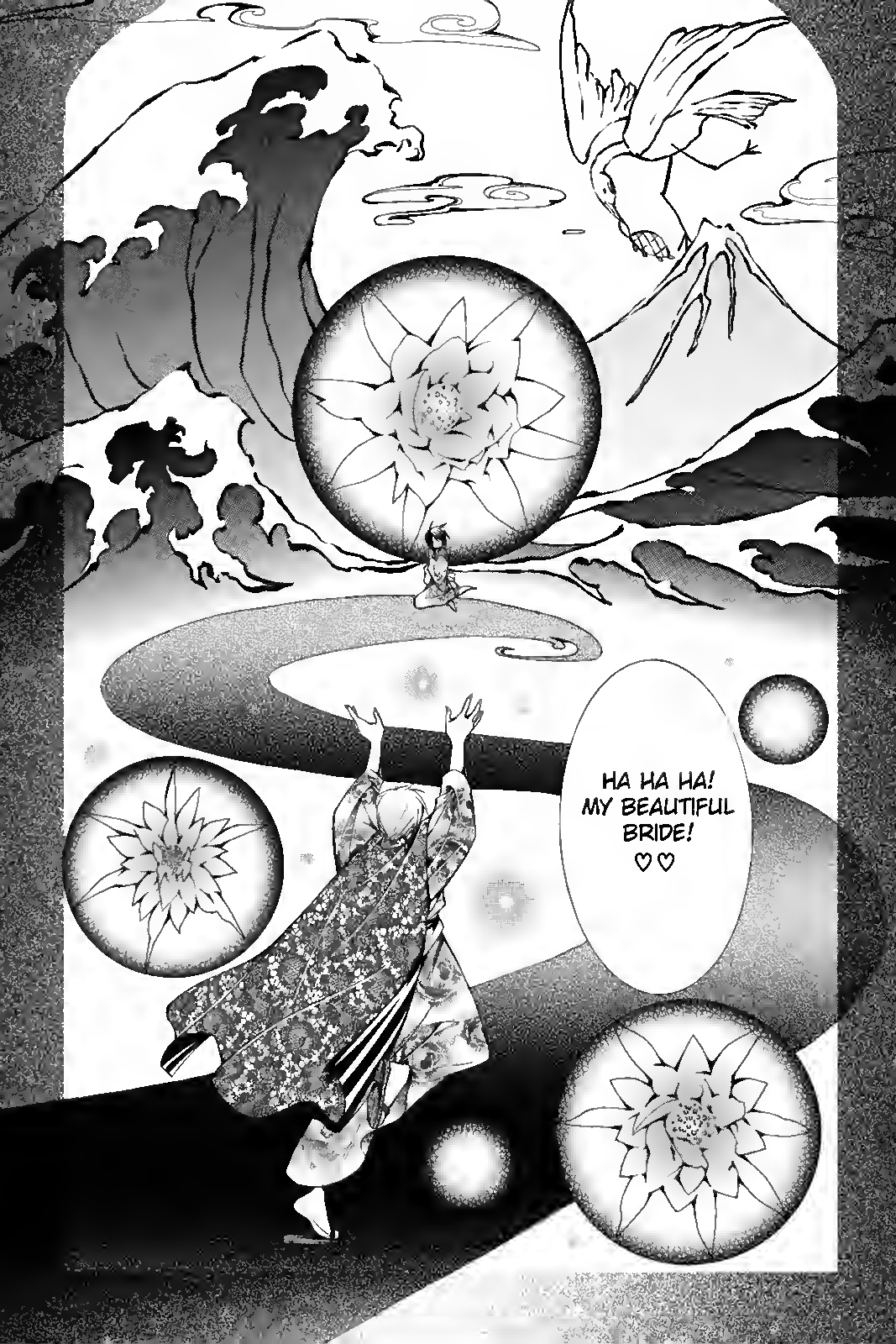
CLICK

THE DOOR IS NOW OPEN.
THE DECISION IS YOURS.

A FANTASY ISN'T REAL. I'D JUST BE INDULGING MYSELF. I'D RATHER...
Hifumi?
UM... AH...
Dare I waste this chance ?!
ROLL
ROLL
But I want it so bad! I want to marry Mizuki right now!
I'M GETTING MARRIED!
I WANT TO!
IF YOU DON'T WANT TO, I'LL CLOSE—
THUNK


CREAK...
IT'LL BE PRACTICE FOR THE REAL THING!
I'M OFF! ♡
SLAM

WE DON'T HAVE REHEARSALS HERE.
OH DEAR... A REHEARSAL?
HIFUMI SAID HE LIVED AT THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE. I WONDER IF THIS IS...
銀星館
WHAT IS IT, SHIMA?
OH, IS THIS...?
STARE
SO WE HAVE ONE OF HIS FRIENDS IN OUR ROOMS.
AH... HIRUKO'S...
OH... SHOULD WE NOT HAVE DONE THAT?


HA HA HA!
MY BEAUTIFUL
BRIDE!
♡♡

DASH
YOU MUST BE MIZUKI'S BROTHER!
※DISCLAIMER: THIS IS HIFUMI'S FANTASY
HM? YES, WE'RE GOING TO BE BROTHERS!
NICE TO MEET YOU. I'M HIFUMI. I'M MARRYING MIZUKI.
Ah... yes
NO? OH, WHAT I MEANT...
WHAT? YES, WE'RE VERY HAPPY.
YOU'RE JUST AS HANDSOME AS I THOUGHT YOU'D BE.
HIFUMI! ♡
ONE HOUR LATER
HE WAS HARD TO UNDER-STAND. NOT SURPRISING FROM A FORMER BAKU.

COME QUICKLY ...
LET'S GET MARRIED.
MY ANGEL!

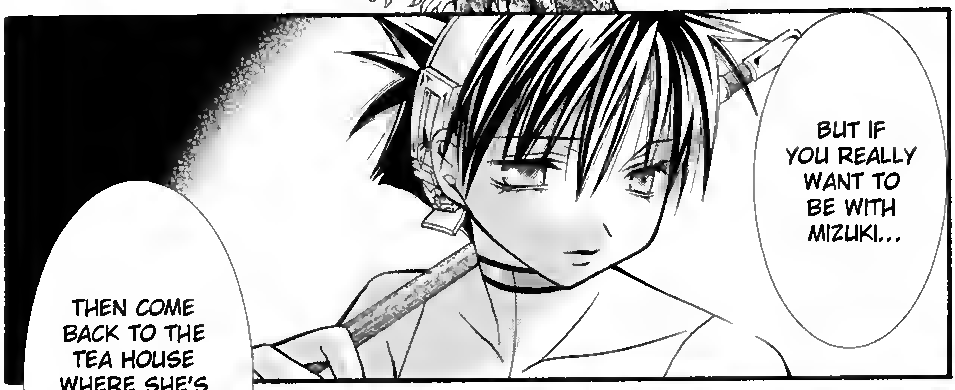
I AM YOUR CAGED BIRD.
WITH AN EXQUISITE VOICE I'LL SING...
...A BEAUTIFUL SONG OF LOVE...
...WHEN OUR LIPS MEET...

WHA
CK
STOMP
WAKE UP, FOOL.
DARN IT! MIZUKI AND I WERE JUST ABOUT TO...
?!
H-HIRUKO?! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?!
SHIMA CALLED ME HERE... DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'VE DONE?

PEOPLE IN HERE ARE SHOULDERING IMPOSSIBLE DESTINIES...
YOU CAN'T JUST STEP IN AND OUT OF THESE ROOMS.
NOT EVERYTHING HAS A HAPPY ENDING HERE.
I JUST THOUGHT OF MARRYING MIZUKI.
DIDN'T YOU THINK ABOUT WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NEXT?
"LET'S GET MARRIED."
FORGETTING IT WAS A FANTASY AND DOOMED TO REPEAT IT FOREVER...
YOU ONLY KEEP REPEATING THE CEREMONY
WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE? THERE'S NOTHING AFTER THE MARRIAGE.

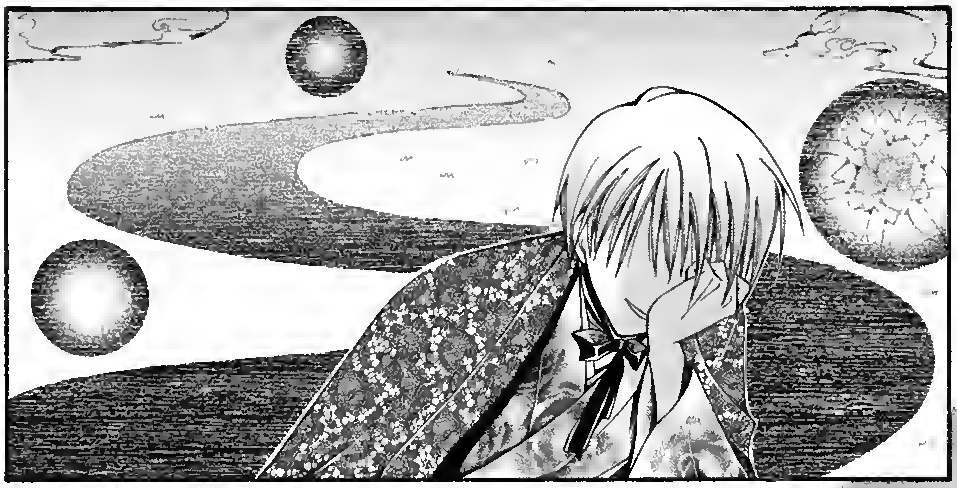
DON'T WORRY. YOU CAN STILL GET OUT IF YOU'VE COME TO YOUR SENSES.

"LET'S GET MARRIED."
"LET'S GET MARRIED."
"LET'S GET MARRIED."
...
SHIVER

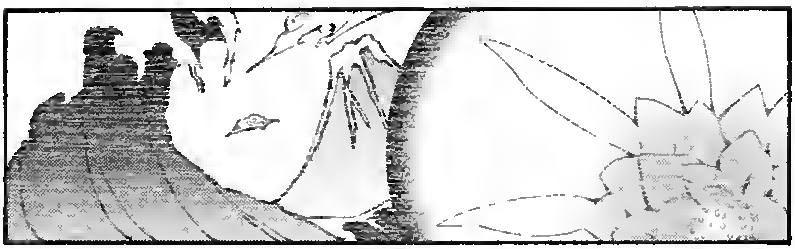

BUT IF YOU REALLY WANT TO BE WITH MIZUKI...

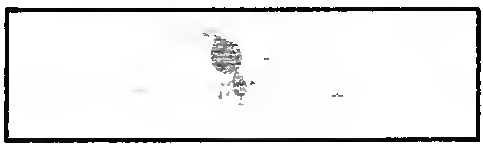
THEN COME BACK TO THE TEA HOUSE WHERE SHE'S BEEN WORRYING ABOUT YOU.

"A FANTASY ISN'T REAL..."

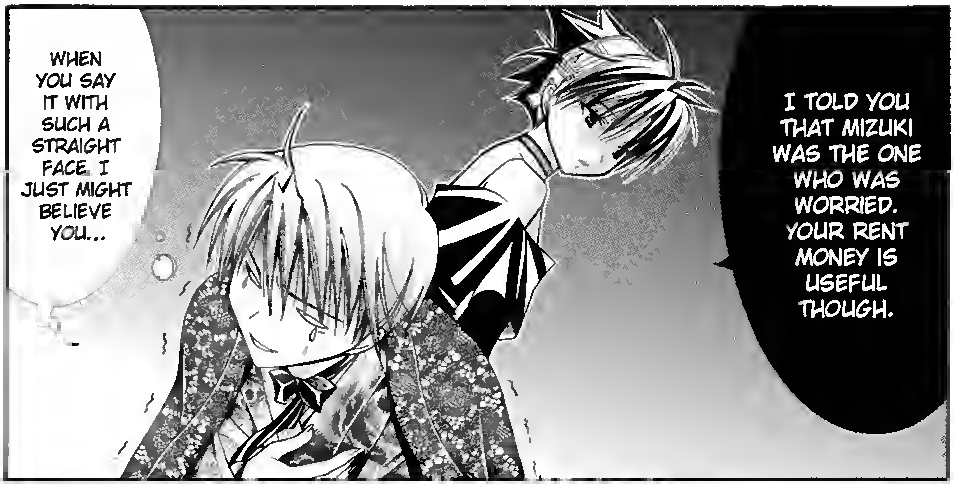


SO TRUE ...





YOU KNOW EACH OTHER?
YES, HIRUKO COMES HERE SOME-TIMES.
SO HE CAN COME AND GO?
I should have known!
SO I TOLD HIM THAT YOU WERE HERE.
...AND YOU CAME? YOU WERE WORRIED ABOUT ME?
HA HA HA HA. YOU DO HAVE A GOOD SIDE.
ACK!
WHOMP

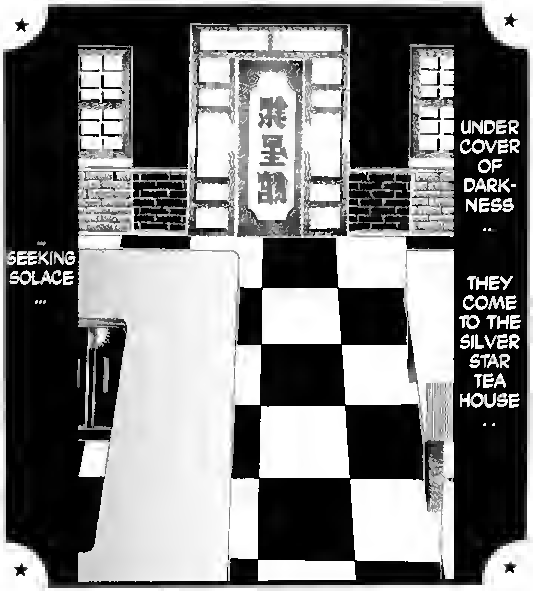

I TOLD YOU THAT MIZUKI WAS THE ONE WHO WAS WORRIED. YOUR RENT MONEY IS USEFUL THOUGH.
WHEN YOU SAY IT WITH SUCH A STRAIGHT FACE, I JUST MIGHT BELIEVE YOU...

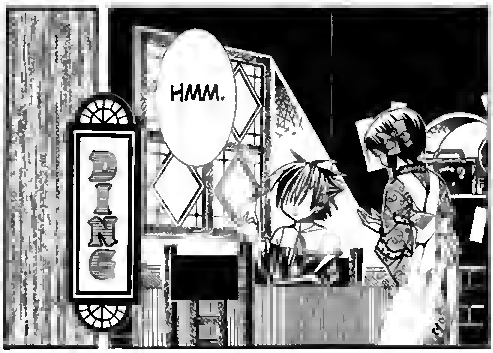
THAT'S FINE. IF I'M KEEPING THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE OPEN...
ONCE WE'VE SAVED ENOUGH MONEY WE WON'T NEED YOU.
EEK!
LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE HAVING A NICE LIFE.

I'M GLAD.
I HOPE IT'LL STAY THAT WAY.

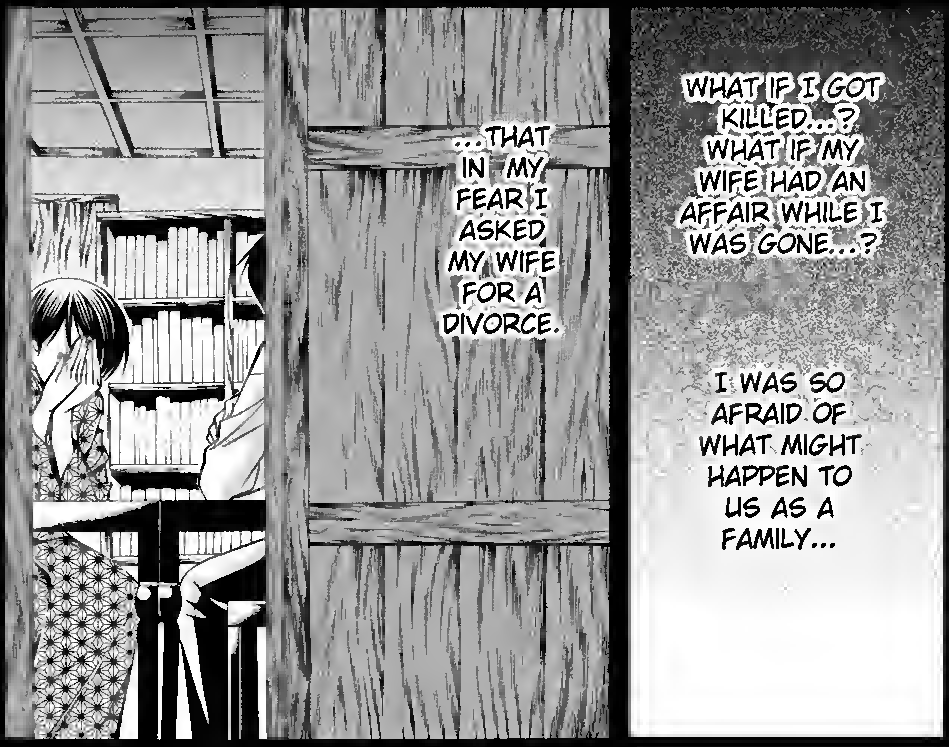
WE'RE GOING HOME.
ACK!!
BYE, SHIMA! COME OVER ANYTIME!
DEFINITELY! YOU TOO! COME BACK AND I'LL SHOW YOU AROUND!

# THE THIRTY-SECOND NIGHT: EXPAND

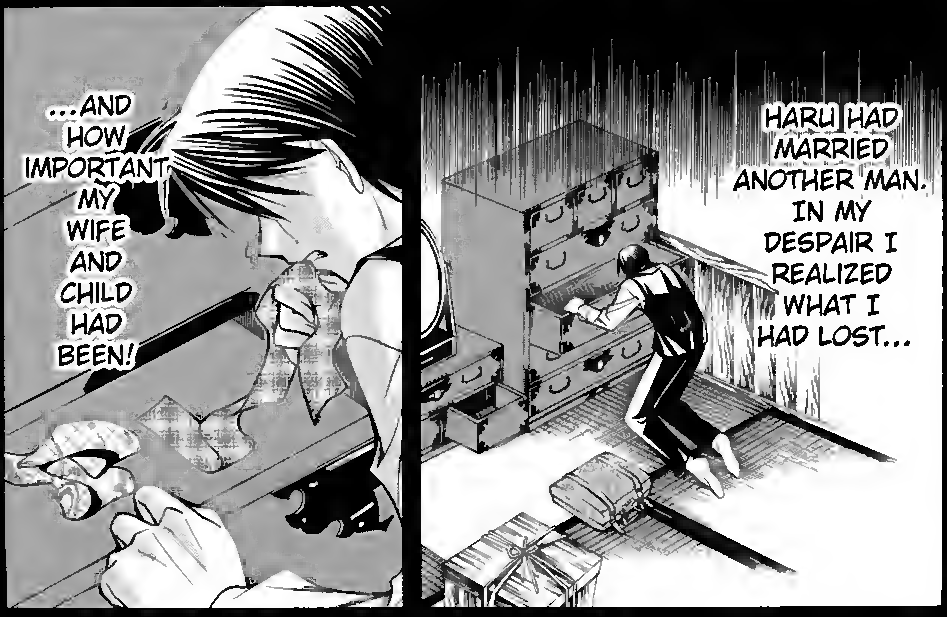


HOW MANY DAYS DO I HAVE TO KEEP COMING HERE?
ARE YOU EVEN TRYING TO HELP?!
...
MAYBE YOU DON'T GET HOW MUCH DISTRESS I'M IN...
THUNK
THEN LET ME TELL YOU MY STORY AGAIN.
FOUR YEARS AGO, I WAS A NEWSPAPER REPORTER. I HAD A LOVING WIFE, HARU, AND A DAUGHTER, SHIGERU.
WE HAD BEEN LIVING A HAPPY LIFE...
THEN I HAD TO LEAVE FOR SIBERIA ON A WAR ASSIGNMENT. I FEARED THE WORST.


...THAT IN MY FEAR I ASKED MY WIFE FOR A DIVORCE.
WHAT IF I GOT KILLED...? WHAT IF MY WIFE HAD AN AFFAIR WHILE I WAS GONE...?
I WAS SO AFRAID OF WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN TO US AS A FAMILY...

WHEN I CAME BACK SAFELY, I HAD NOWHERE TO GO.

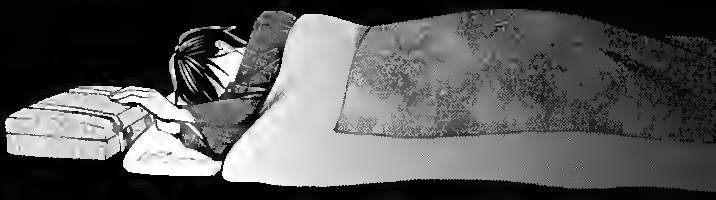


I RELIVED THE PAST OVER AND OVER IN MY DREAMS.

THE BIRTH OF OUR DAUGHTER.
OUR MARRIAGE.
THE FIRST TIME I MET HARU.
EVENTUALLY, THE DREAMS BECAME NIGHTMARES.
MY PAST HAPPINESS FILLED MY DAYS...

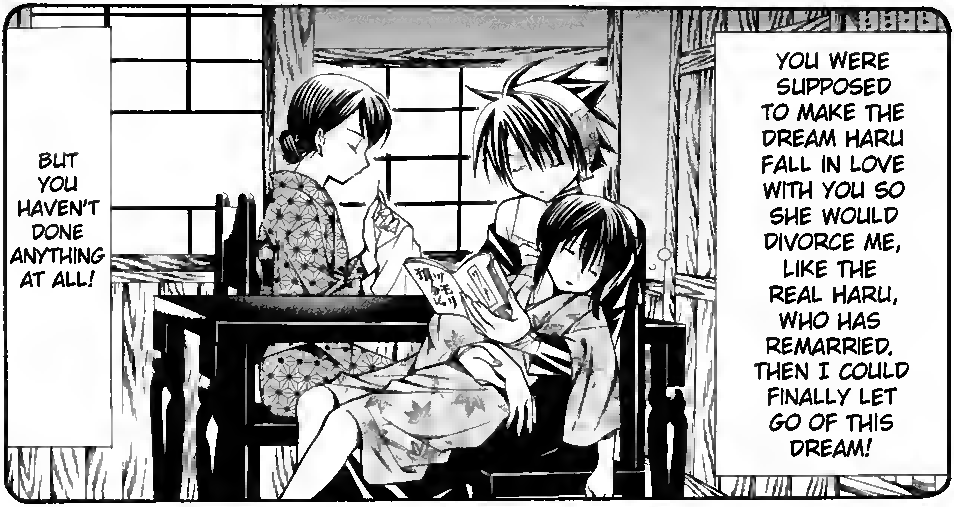
I WANTED MORE AND MORE...

I STARTED SLEEPING ALL THE TIME...



THIS ONE?
NOT THAT!
IT'S TIME TO LEAVE WHERE'S MY FAVORITE RIBBON?!
IT GOT SO I COULDN'T TELL MY DREAMS FROM REALITY
CLATCH
IS IT THIS ONE?
UMM
WHERE IS IT?!
MY FAVORITE RIBBON...
WHENEVER I WOKE, I WAS SO CONFUSED.
NOT THAT ...
WAIT FOR ME, SHIGERU. DADDY'S COMING TOO...

SO I'VE BEEN COMING HERE EVERY NIGHT FOR HELP.
THE PAST, MY DREAMS, REALITY... EVERYTHING WAS OVERLAPPING... I CAN'T STAND IT!

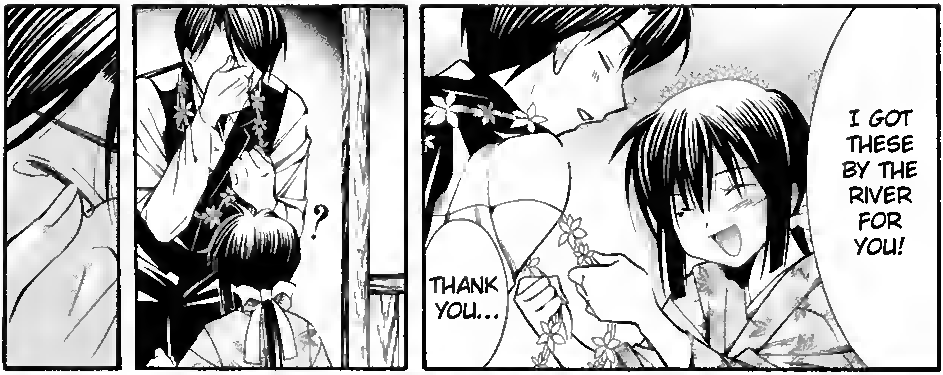

BUT YOU HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING AT ALL!
YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO MAKE THE DREAM HARU FALL IN LOVE WITH YOU SO SHE WOULD DIVORCE ME, LIKE THE REAL HARU, WHO HAS REMARRIED. THEN I COULD FINALLY LET GO OF THIS DREAM!

BUT SHIGERU IS BECOMING ATTACHED TO ME.
YOUR INTENSE FEELINGS ARE MAKING IT DIFFICULT FOR HER.

YOU'RE PATHETIC. YOU CAN'T EVEN MAKE ONE WOMAN FALL FOR YOU! I SUPPOSE THAT HARU IS TOO LOYAL TO ME...

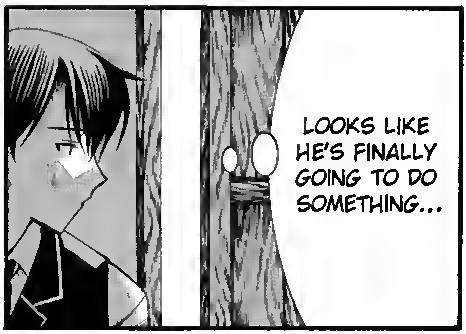
DO WHATEVER IT TAKES!
HEH HEH... THINGS WILL GET SERIOUS TONIGHT.
SLEEP NOW... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.

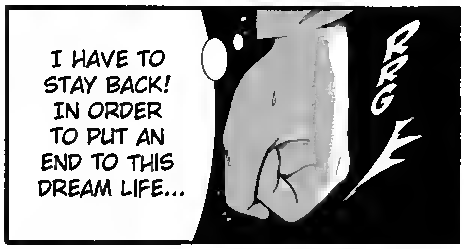
CLATTER
DADDY!
WELCOME HOME, SHIGEO.

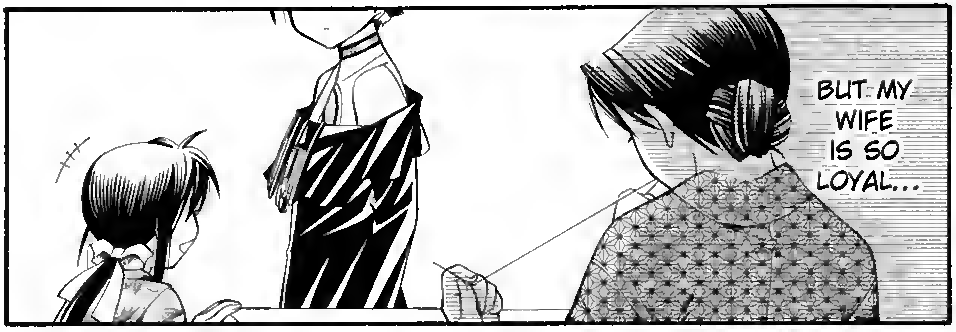



THIS IS A DREAM.
IT'S NOT REAL.
I CAN'T HOLD ON TO THIS FOREVER!

OH, HIRUKO! YOU CAME AGAIN! YAY!


LOOKS LIKE HE'S FINALLY GOING TO DO SOMETHING...


I HAVE TO STAY BACK! IN ORDER TO PUT AN END TO THIS DREAM LIFE...
DRG
E


BUT MY WIFE IS SO LOYAL...

I'LL SHOW YOU IN PRIVATE.

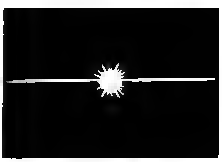
I BROUGHT YOU SOMETHING.
Guess what's in my pocket!
WHAT IS IT? WHAT IS IT?

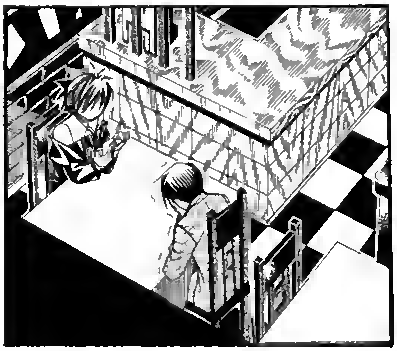
AAAAH!
WHAT'S HE DOING? HE SHOULD BE WOOING MY WIFE...
CLATTER
WHAT HAPPENED ?!
SHIGERU ?!
DASH

SHI... SHIGERU?
AAAAAH!

HARU...
HARU, TOO...
WH-WHY DID YOU DO THIS...
IT WAS THE QUICK-EST WAY.
WITH YOUR PRECIOUS WIFE AND DAUGHTER DEAD, YOUR FAMILY LIFE IS OVER.
NOW ALL WE NEED IS *YOUR* DEATH...

TIME TO WAKE UP.





HARU... SHIGERU... HOW HORRIBLE...

IF WE HADN'T, YOUR DREAM WOULD HAVE KEPT EXPANDING.

THE BEST WAY TO RELEASE YOU FROM THE OVERLAPPING OF YOUR DREAM AND REALITY WAS TO END ONE OF THEM.

I'M SUCH AN IDIOT... TO REALIZE ITS IMPORTANCE ONLY AFTER IT'S GONE...

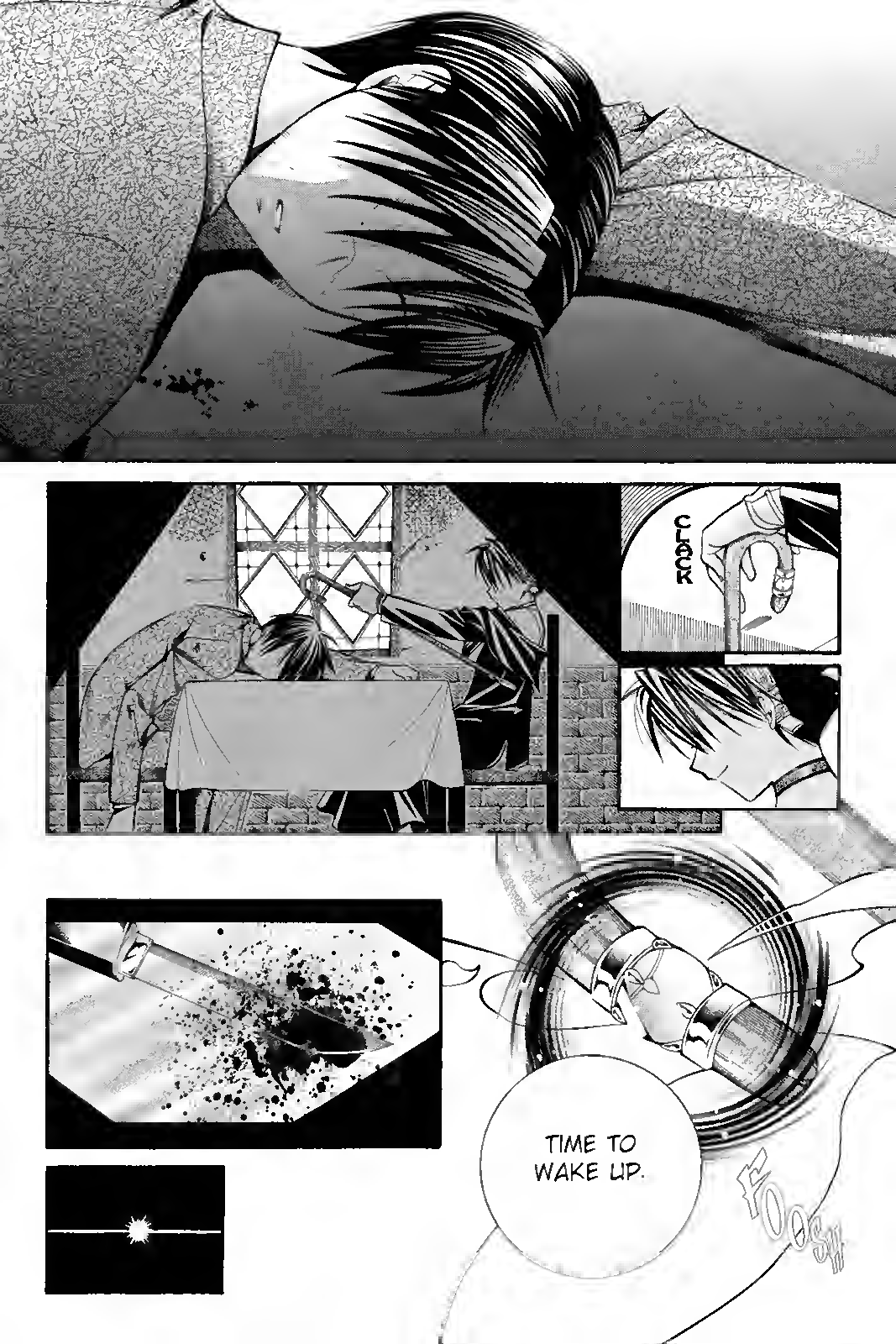
ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU WANTED? YOUR LIFE IS NOW BACK TO WHAT IT WAS BEFORE.

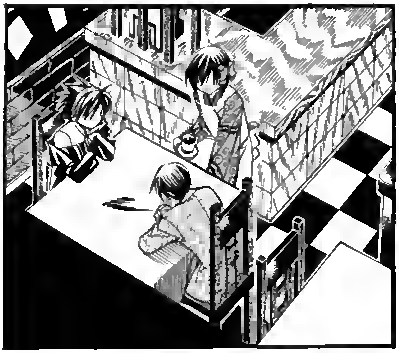
...SO ALL THAT'S LEFT IS THIS REALITY? A LIFE WITH NO WIFE, NO CHILD, NO REASON TO LIVE?

I SHOULD HAVE JUST KEPT DREAMING UNTIL I DIED.
EVEN IF IT WAS A DREAM IT WAS BETTER THAN BEING LEFT IN THIS HARSH REALITY...
BUT I DON'T EVEN HAVE THAT NOW...
THERE'S NOTHING TO KEEP ME GOING...
I SHOULD JUST END THIS REAL LIFE TOO...
STAGGER...
...RIGHT?

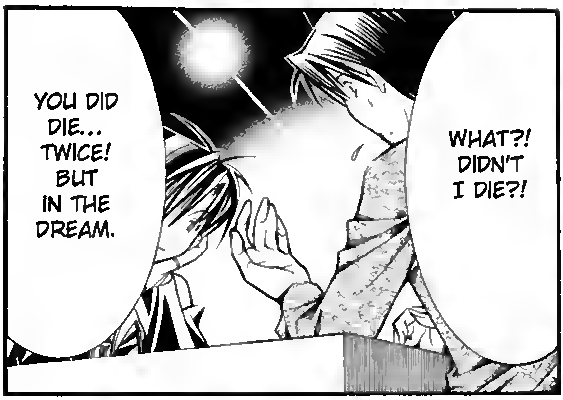
HARU AND HER SECOND HUSBAND WERE KILLED IN THE GREAT KANTO EARTHQUAKE.
OH, BY THE WAY... APPARENTLY, SHIGERU IS LIVING WITH RELATIVES.

I BET SHE REALLY WANTED TO SEE YOU...
IF ONLY I HAD KNOWN...
CHUD
?!
HOW DO YOU KNOW ALL THIS...? SHIGERU...

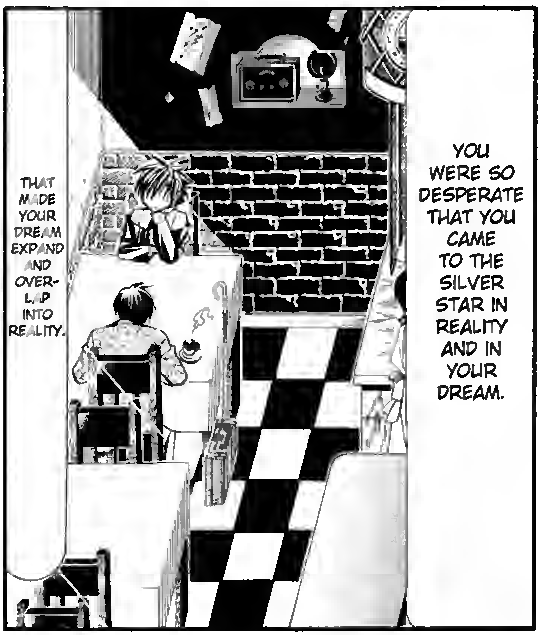

CLICK
TIME TO WAKE UP.
FOOSH!!

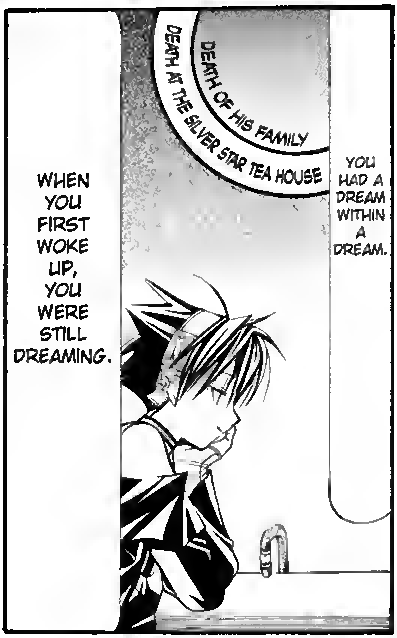


GOOD MORNING, SHIGEO.


YOU DID DIE... TWICE! BUT IN THE DREAM.
WHAT?! DIDN'T I DIE?!

?
?


THAT MADE YOUR DREAM EXPAND AND OVER-LAP INTO REALITY.
YOU WERE SO DESPERATE THAT YOU CAME TO THE SILVER STAR IN REALITY AND IN YOUR DREAM.


WHEN YOU FIRST WOKE UP, YOU WERE STILL DREAMING.
DEATH OF HIS FAMILY
DEATH AT THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE
YOU HAD A DREAM WITHIN A DREAM.

AND NOW YOU'VE COME BACK TO REALITY.
BUT BOTH DREAMS ENDED WHEN YOU DIED.
Y'KNOW, EVEN WITH THE HELP OF MY FATHER'S MONEY, IT STILL TOOK SEVERAL DAYS TO FIND HER. SHE WAS BEING SHUTTLED AROUND BETWEEN RELATIVES.
DING
TH-THEN...
SHIGERU ?!
LIKE I SAID IN MY NOTE, I FOUND HER THOUGH.

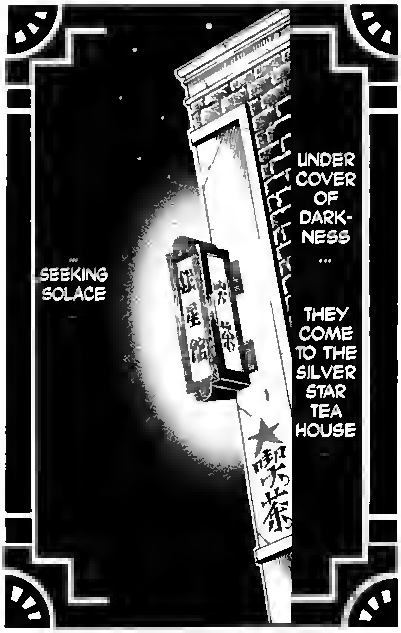
HIRUKO... THAT'S WHY YOU DIDN'T DO ANYTHING FOR SO LONG.
IT'S REALLY YOU! NOT SOME DREAM OR MEMORY...
SHIGERU.
CLATTER
YOU'VE GROWN SO MUCH.
MAKE SURE YOU DON'T LOSE IT AGAIN.
NOW YOU'VE FOUND A REASON TO LIVE.
DADDY!
DASH
SWIP
I WON'T!

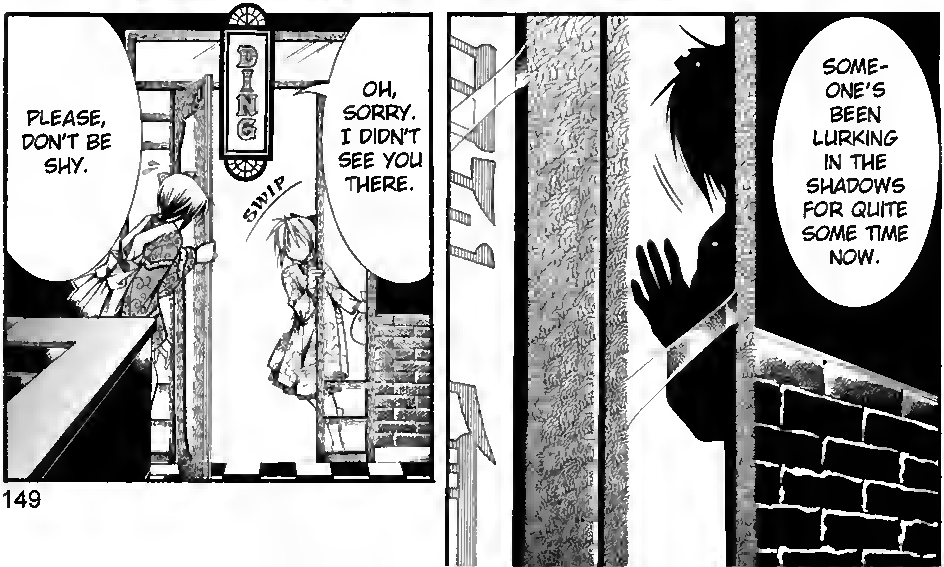
DADDY, HOW COULD YOU! WHY DID YOU LEAVE MOMMY?!
WHY DID YOU LEAVE ME?!
I'M SO SORRY! SHIGERU!

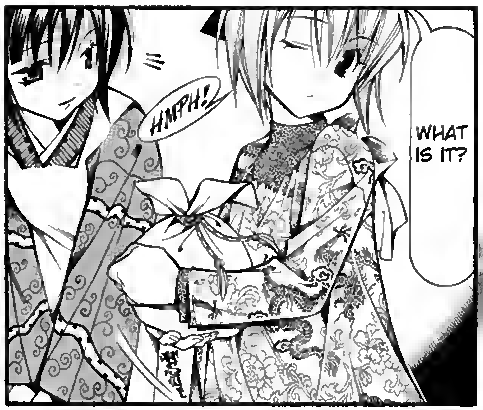
SQUEEZE
I'LL NEVER LEAVE YOU AGAIN!

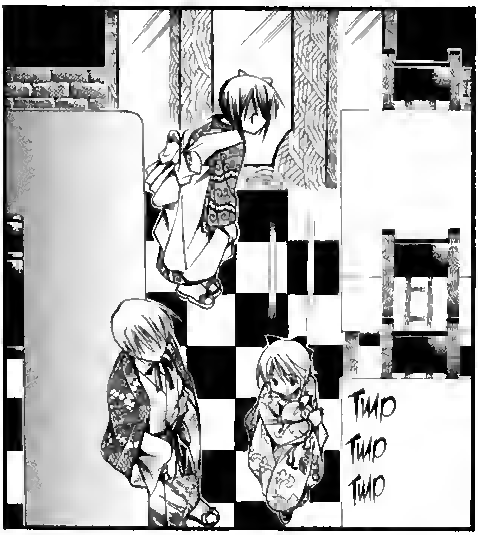
...ISN'T IT?
YES, IT'S YOUR FAVORITE RIBBON.
DADDY, IS THIS ...?
NO, IT'S NOT!
YOU'RE SO SILLY!

# The Thirty-Third Night: Stories






HMPH!
WHAT IS IT?


TWO
TWO
TWO

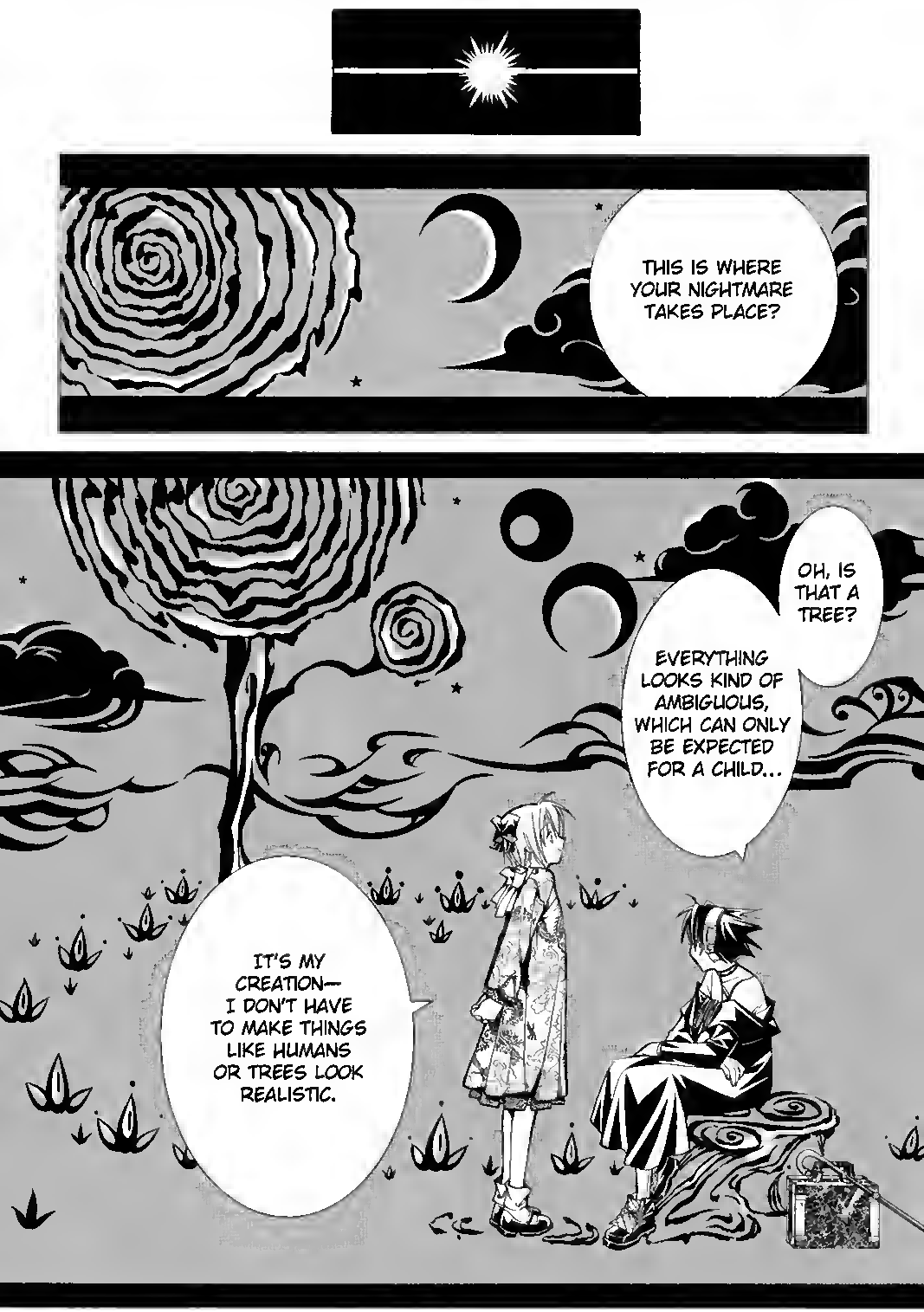
GREAT... LOOKS LIKE WE HAVE A STRANGE ONE.

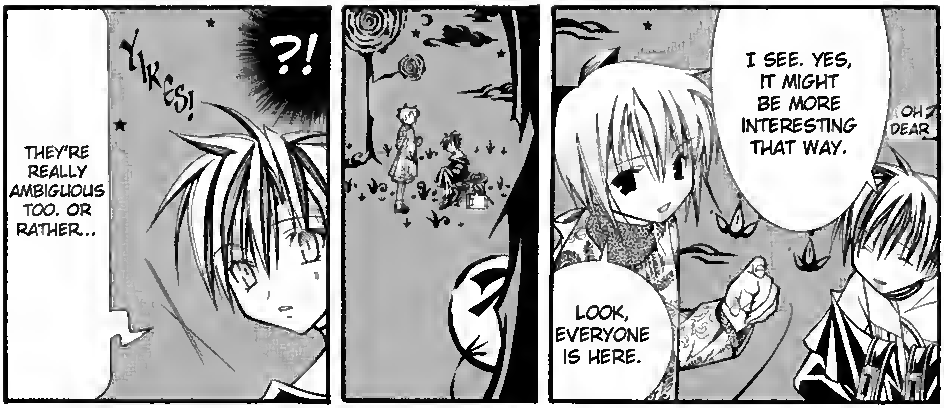
CUP

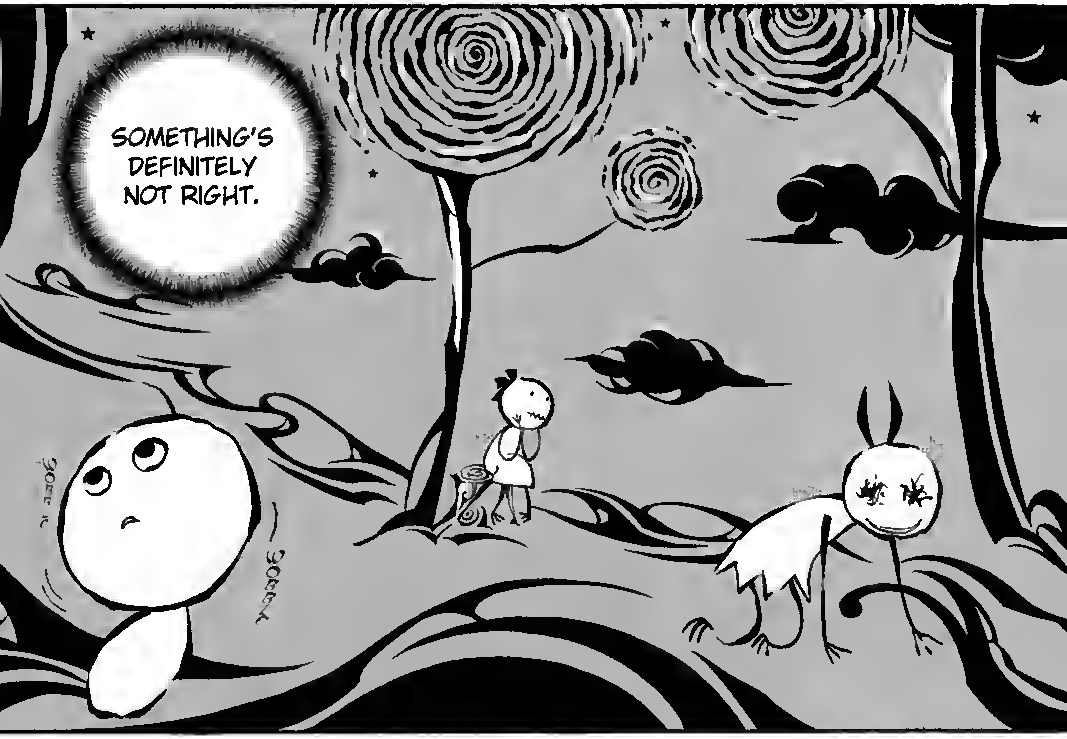
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
GOOD EVENING. ARE YOU HERE ABOUT A NIGHTMARE?
HOW CUTE! ♡
SAWA HITOMI! I'M REALLY GOOD AT MAKING UP STORIES. HEE HEE. I'M GOING TO BE A WRITER WHEN I GET OLDER.
SO YOU'RE GOOD AT MAKING UP STORIES.
YES, AS SOON AS I MEET SOMEONE I CAN MAKE UP A STORY ABOUT THEM.
WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO MAKE ONE ABOUT YOU?
NO, THAT'S OKAY.
Oh! REALLY?
RIGHT NOW I'M BUSY MAKING UP A STORY ABOUT MY FRIENDS TAKU, CHIYO AND YAE. WE'RE ALWAYS TOGETHER. I SPEND ALL DAY THINKING OF MY STORY. SO MUCH, THAT I FORGET REALITY.

IT SHOULDN'T CHANGE BECAUSE IT'S NOW A DREAM.
BUT IF YOU CREATED THE STORY YOURSELF, DON'T YOU HAVE CONTROL OVER IT?
YES... I'VE BEEN HAVING A NIGHTMARE ABOUT MY STORY...
...
IS THAT STORY WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?
THERE MUST BE SOMETHING WRONG WITH THE STORY...
I SHOULD PROBABLY SEE FOR MYSELF.
OH WELL. LOOKS LIKE I'M BABYSITTING TONIGHT.
MY STORY WAS SO PERFECT...
YOU WOULD THINK... BUT IT'S BECOME A NIGHTMARE.
I'M SO SAD...

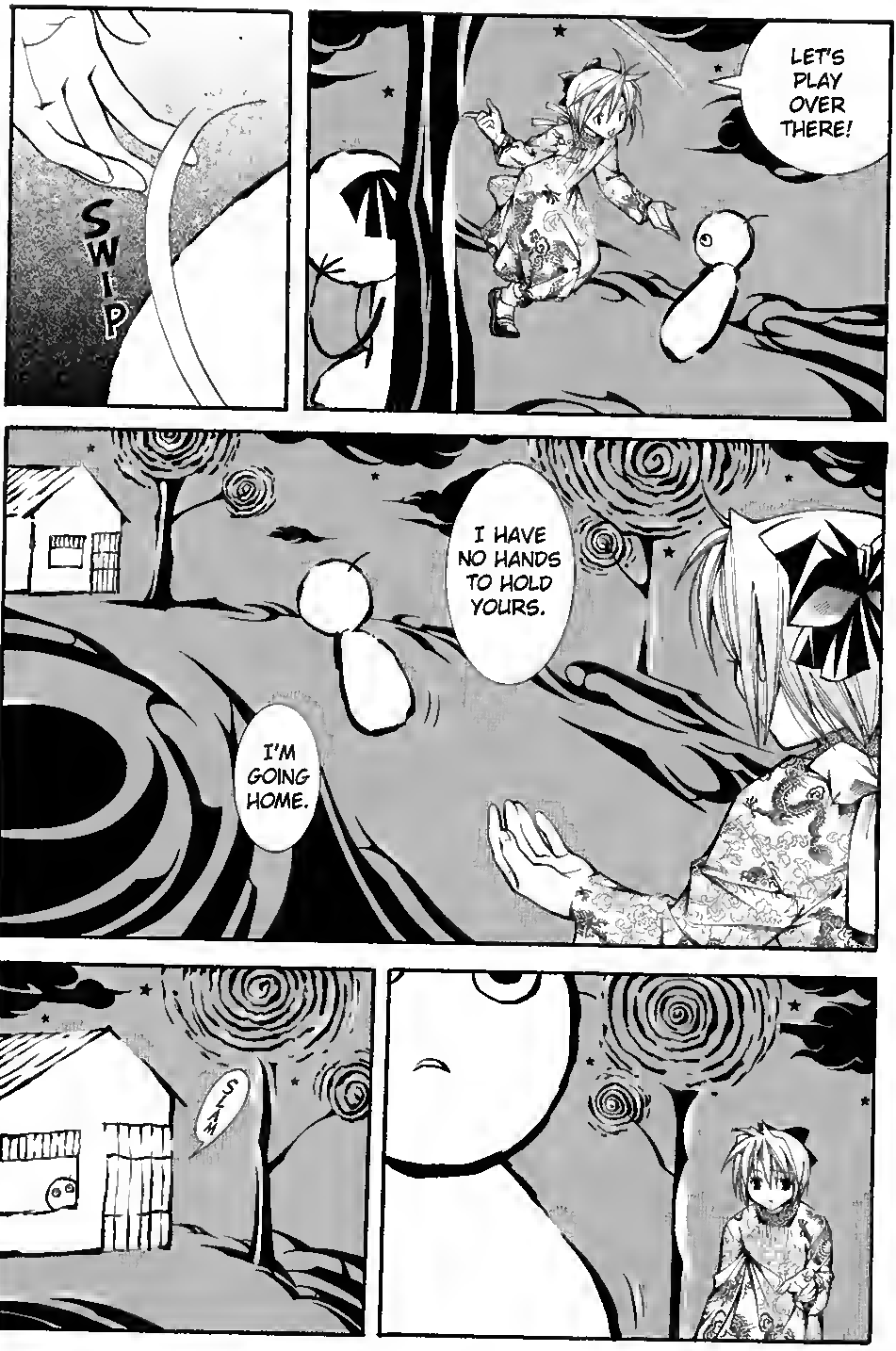
SLEEP NOW... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.


THIS IS WHERE YOUR NIGHTMARE TAKES PLACE?
OH, IS THAT A TREE?
EVERYTHING LOOKS KIND OF AMBIGUOUS, WHICH CAN ONLY BE EXPECTED FOR A CHILD...
IT'S MY CREATION— I DON'T HAVE TO MAKE THINGS LIKE HUMANS OR TREES LOOK REALISTIC.

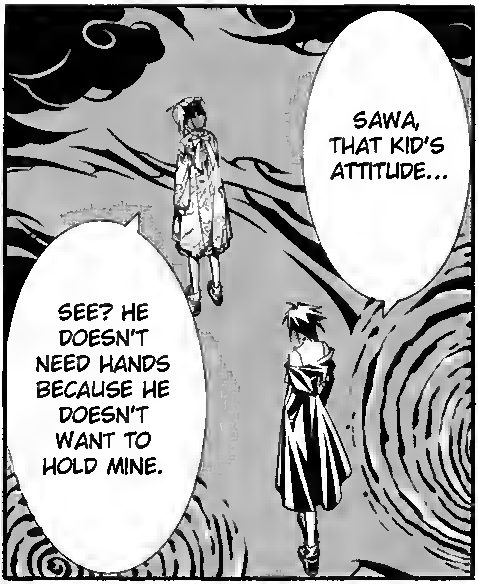

?!
YIKES!
THEY'RE REALLY AMBIGUOUS TOO. OR RATHER..
I SEE. YES, IT MIGHT BE MORE INTERESTING THAT WAY.
OH DEAR.
LOOK, EVERYONE IS HERE.


SOMETHING'S DEFINITELY NOT RIGHT.

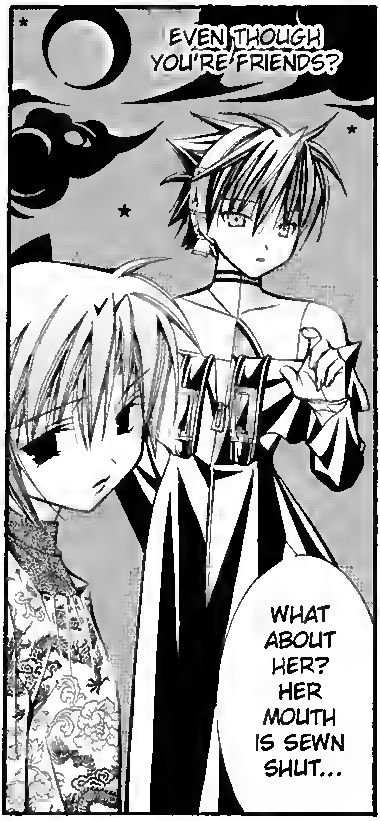
GOOD EVENING, TAKU!
THAT'S TAKU.
SAWA, THE KID ON THE LEFT...
HE HAS NO ARMS OR LEGS ...


SWIP
LET'S PLAY OVER THERE!
I HAVE NO HANDS TO HOLD YOURS.
I'M GOING HOME.
SLAM

HE'S AVOIDING ME.
WHENEVER I COME, HE ALWAYS GOES HOME...


SAWA, THAT KID'S ATTITUDE...
SEE? HE DOESN'T NEED HANDS BECAUSE HE DOESN'T WANT TO HOLD MINE.

CHIYO.


EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE FRIENDS?
WHAT ABOUT HER? HER MOUTH IS SEWN SHUT...

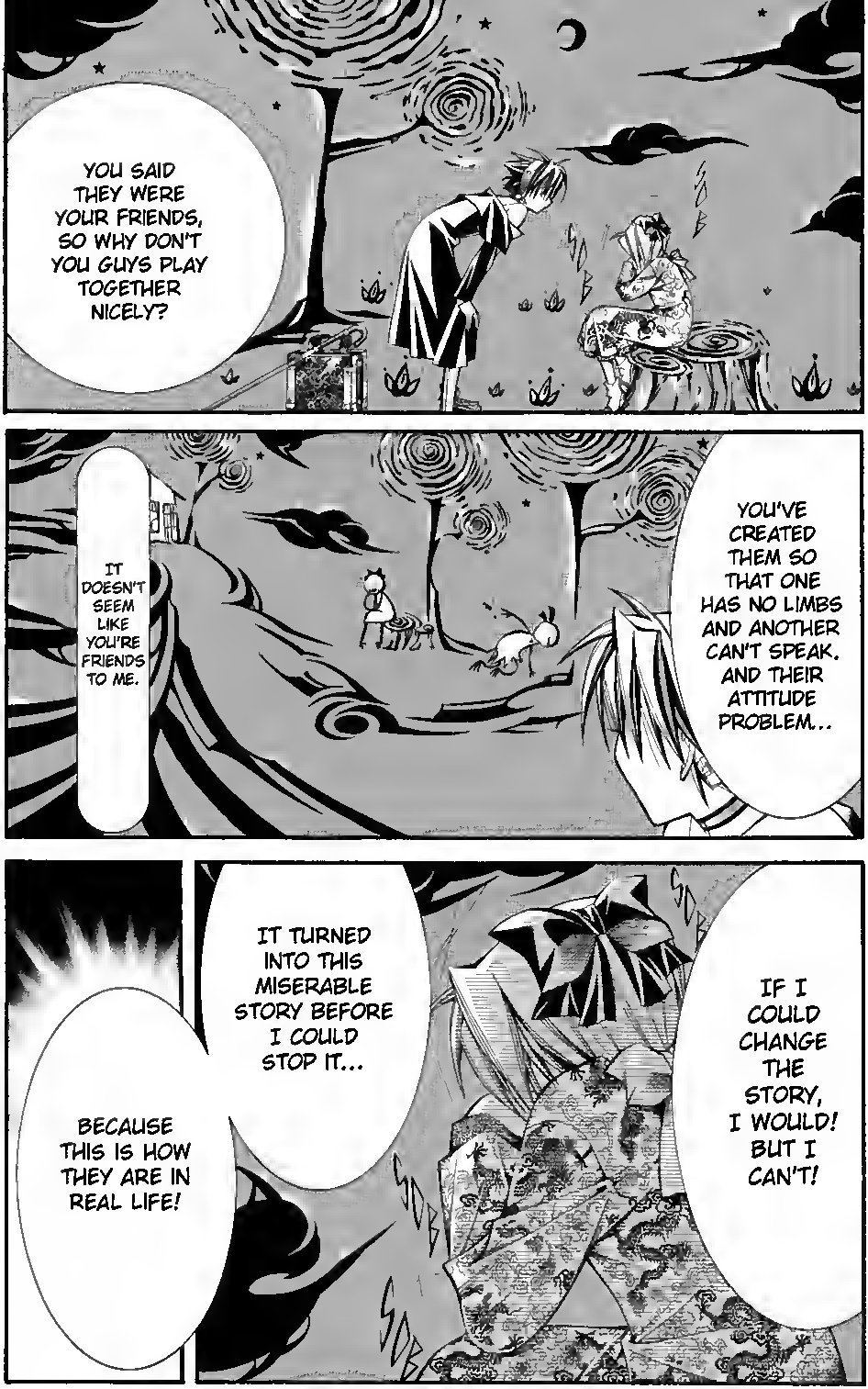
TMP

SHE DOESN'T SEEM INTERESTED IN ANYTHING. SHE JUST IGNORES ME. LET'S LEAVE HER.
SINCE SHE DOESN'T WANT TO TALK TO YOU, IS THAT WHY SHE HAS NO MOUTH?
HI, CHIYO. I BROUGHT A GUEST WITH ME TODAY.
DID YOU WANT TO CHAT?
SHE SEEMS HAPPY JUST SITTING THERE SAYING NOTHING

SCRATCH
YAE! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
SCRATCH
THE LAST CHILD MUST BE YAE.
EWWW! A WORM!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! I TOLD YOU I HATE WORMS! STOP DIGGING THEM UP!
SCRATCH
I'D PREFER IT IF YOU DIDN'T.
THEN DON'T COME HERE ANYMORE

SWIPE
YOU'RE SUCH A PAIN! GO AWAY!
BUT...
UH...
UH...
THAT'S WHY HER EYES...
YAE WON'T EVEN LOOK AT ME...
SCRATCH
SCRATCH
I'M SO LONELY!
PLAY WITH ME!
WAAH! WAAH!

YAE! STOP IT! YOU'RE ALWAYS HITTING PEOPLE...
SWISH
GASP
SPLAT
DON'T COME NEAR ME!
SAWA, IS THIS THE STORY YOU CREATED?
...
GO AWAY!
SWIP
GO AWAY!
SCRATCH
SCRATCH
GO AWAY!


YOU SAID THEY WERE YOUR FRIENDS, SO WHY DON'T YOU GUYS PLAY TOGETHER NICELY?
IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE YOU'RE FRIENDS TO ME.
YOU'VE CREATED THEM SO THAT ONE HAS NO LIMBS AND ANOTHER CAN'T SPEAK. AND THEIR ATTITUDE PROBLEM...
BECAUSE THIS IS HOW THEY ARE IN REAL LIFE!
IT TURNED INTO THIS MISERABLE STORY BEFORE I COULD STOP IT...
IF I COULD CHANGE THE STORY, I WOULD! BUT I CAN'T!

I THOUGHT SO.
TAKU WON'T HOLD MY HAND. CHIYO WON'T TALK TO ME.
YAE WON'T EVEN LOOK AT ME.
SO YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO THOUGHT YOU WERE FRIENDS...
HUH?
THEN YOU HAVE TO WORK HARDER TO UNDERSTAND THEM.
I WANT US TO BE FRIENDS IN REAL LIFE!
BUT I WANT US TO BE FRIENDS!
AND BY TURNING THIS STORY INTO A DREAM, YOU CREATED A NIGHTMARE...

DON'T SHY AWAY FROM THEIR ATTITUDE IN REAL LIFE. NEXT TIME, TRY YOUR BEST TO MAKE UP A HAPPY STORY TO TELL THEM.
YOU WERE FRIGHTENED BY THEIR BEHAVIOR AND HAVEN'T SHOWN YOUR TRUE SELF. YOU HAVE TO LET THEM GET TO KNOW YOU. OR ELSE YOU'LL NEVER GET ALONG.
BUT... HOW?
TRY MY BEST TO MAKE A HAPPY STORY...
THEN, WILL THEY BE HAPPY?
THEN, WILL THEY UNDERSTAND ME?
...OKAY, I'LL TRY.
I REALLY WANT TO BECOME FRIENDS WITH THEM.
IF YOU WANT IT YOU HAVE TO TRY.

I SHOULD BE ABLE TO CREATE A WONDERFUL STORY!
OH DEAR... FORMING RELATIONSHIPS ISN'T THAT SIMPLE, BUT IT'S A MOVE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.
WHATEVER THE OUTCOME...
TIME TO WAKE UP.

OH YES ...
YES, I'M FINE! THANK YOU FOR TONIGHT.
CAN YOU GET HOME ON YOUR OWN?
?!
WHAT? NOW?
ARE THEY NEARBY?
FWP
BEFORE I GO, I'LL INTRODUCE YOU TO EVERYONE!
SAWA!
I THOUGHT YOU'D BE HERE!
DING
I TOLD YOU WE WERE ALWAYS TOGETHER.

M-MOTHER?!
HOW COULD YOU JUST RUN OUT LIKE THAT! I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU FOR HOURS!
!
I TOLD YOU TO THROW IT AWAY!
WHY DO YOU CARRY THAT DISGUSTING THING AROUND?!
ARE YOU STILL CARRYING THAT?!
WE'RE GOING HOME RIGHT NOW, SAWA!
CRUNCH
CRUSH
CRUSH
THIS IS WHY YOU CAN'T MAKE REAL FRIENDS!

NOOOO!
CHIYO!
YAE!
TAKU ...!

NO... NO!
THEY'RE... NOT... MOVING!
?!
REALLY, SAWA! JUST BECAUSE YOU CAN'T MAKE REAL FRIENDS, DON'T GIVE THESE THINGS NAMES AND PRETEND THEY'RE YOUR FRIENDS!
AND TO TOP IT OFF, YOU END UP HAVING NIGHT-MARES ABOUT YOUR STORIES!
YANK

BUT... BUT I'D DECIDED...
THAT I WAS GOING TO TRY HARDER TO BE THEIR FRIEND...
THAT I WOULD MAKE UP A HAPPY STORY FOR US!
HOW RIDICULOUS!
THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH YOU, CHILD!
SLAM
...
HIRUKO, ARE THOSE HER FRIENDS?
LOOKS LIKE IT.
SHE HAD TROUBLE GETTING ALONG WITH PEOPLE, SO HER ONLY FRIENDS WERE THESE THINGS THAT COULDN'T TALK.
IN HER STORY, WITH ITS AMBIGUOUS IMAGERY, SHE MADE THEM INTO THE SHAPE OF PEOPLE.
IN HER HEART, SHE PROBABLY WANTED PEOPLE FRIENDS...

"I SPEND ALL DAY THINKING OF MY STORY. SO MUCH, THAT I FORGET REALITY."
THESE STORIES WERE ALL SHE THOUGHT ABOUT ALL DAY AND NIGHT.
SO THEY APPEARED IN THE DREAM WITH THEIR REAL-LIFE CHARACTERISTICS.
THE SNAIL HAS NO ARMS AND LEGS.
"I HAVE NO HANDS TO HOLD YOURS."
THE GARDENIA FLOWER DOESN'T OPEN ITS FLOWERING BUD, EVEN WHEN IT'S READY TO BLOOM.
"SHE JUST SITS THERE SAYING NOTHING."
THE MOLE WAS BLIND.
"SHE WON'T EVEN LOOK AT ME."
THE STORY ONLY LED TO SADNESS...

NOW HER STORY HAS ENDED... AND ALL SHE'S LEFT WITH IS A CRUEL REALITY.
-NOT ONLY WAS SHE MAKING UP STORIES, BUT SHE WAS MAKING UP HER FRIENDS TOO.
BUT...
NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR 5: END

# あとがき

AFTERWORD

# 後書キ
# AFTERWORD

Hello! Shin Mashiba here. First of all, a big thank you to my editor, Saeki. I'm eternally grateful for her warm support even though I'm always causing so much trouble. Also huge thanks to the Editor-in-Chief, the staff at Square Enix and to my wonderful readers.

See you soon!

# 感謝！
THANK YOU!

My fabulous assistants:
Katsumi Arai
Mieko Araki
Kozue Okazawa
Yoshimi Shiroko
Kiyoka Shôbayashi
MOA! (info)

I am so indebted to these people. I'm so grateful for their attention to detail in their work. Even though they were busy, they took care of my last-minute requests. Thank you so much!

The people who helped me:

My editor, Yuki Saeki
The Editor-in-Chief
Everyone that was involved in making this book

<Everyone at Square Enix>

My special friends:

Wan Wan Shiroi

If I didn't have Wan Wan, I don't know how I'd get my work done... He's so special.

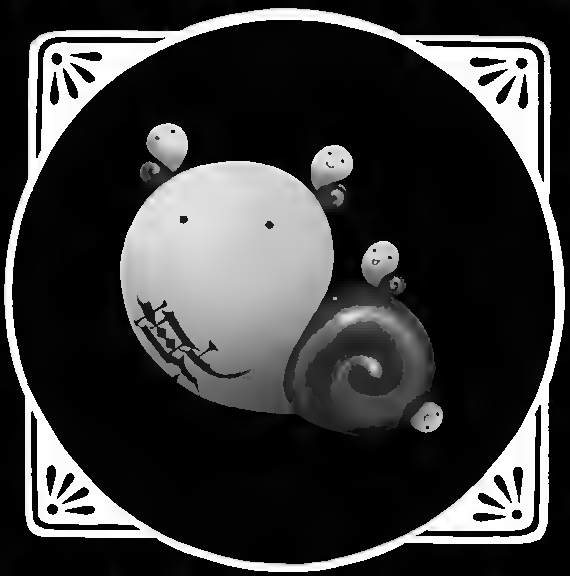
Neema Riru Shirayuki

Two wonderful assistants that are too good for the likes of me. I'm so grateful for their excellent work.

Welcome——
BO
OM
WAAAH!
B
W
O
O
S
H
BOOF
BOOF
BOOF
Hello
Today's fantasy was a bit too much...
GASP
GASP
Do
HOW Wan DO YOU Wan DO?
Shiroi
Poop-flavored curry or curry-flavored poop... the eternal debate.

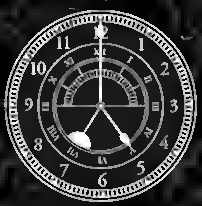
I'm not here.
I'm here.
Excuse me.
I have a fantasy.
Really?
I am soooo hungry.
I don't have any nightmares.
I was thinking of a fantasy with a super violent, love-hate relationship between Hiruko, Hifumi, and my brother would be good. Or maybe a fantasy set in a school, or a historical setting, or had a cosplay theme where you give them cutesy ears or a tail or something... Or you could inject some boys' love in it. Or make it really serious and dramatic. That would be fun too.
Ha ha ha! You seem to have a problem!
Hiruko.
You'll be fine. Probably.
I'll puke.
Let's just go eat.
So I've prepared a special nightmare for you.
I thought this might happen...
Thanks.
Don't think we can run it in the magazine. But since you have so much time on your hands why don't you write a book about it yourself?
Th- They're ignoring me!
Can't help it. At least do it in the restroom.
Don't freak out if I puke.

Dreams on the menu in this volume: a woman tied to a burden she can't escape and another being watched from afar, a fantastic ordeal for Hiruko's briefcase, a girl who no longer feels like herself, a rival Baku who makes nightmares worse, the truth of Hiruko's past, Mizuki's childhood memories, and Hifumi's terrible blunder.



## SHIN MASHIBA

A dream where all your wishes come true. A dream with too happy an ending.
...These are probably the worst nightmares.



Shin Mashiba's first manga, *Yumekui Kenbun* (Nightmare Inspector), premiered in *Monthly Stencil*, a shojo magazine, in December 2001 and was then serialized in *Monthly G Fantasy* from 2003 to 2007. Mashiba-san's own nightmares include being forced to eat 50 living slugs and being chased by time.

# NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR: YUMEKUI KENBUN ⑤

Shin Mashiba

Translation: Gemma Collinge

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Touch-up Art & Lettering: James Gaubatz

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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